



Response to the LGBCE Draft Recommendations for Leicestershire from the County Councillors in the Oadby and Wigston Divisions

1. This is a response to the LGBCE draft recommendations from the Leicestershire County Councillors in the Oadby and Wigston divisions; Helen Loydall, Michael Charlesworth, Bill Boulter, Jeff Kaufman and Dean Gamble.
2. We welcome having the opportunity to respond and put our views forward. We believe that our views are reflective of residents in Oadby and Wigston but have also encouraged as many of them as possible to write directly to the LGBCE in order to make their views known.
3. We recognise that Oadby and Wigston is a difficult case for the boundary review. Even if electoral equality was to be maximised by creating a 5 member division, the variance from the County average would still be greater than 8%.
4. We disagree with the proposals for Oadby and Wigston in LGBCE's draft recommendations. While we recognise that the proposals maximise electoral equality and are perhaps the only way to ensure that no division in the Borough has an electoral variance above 10%, it does so at the expense of community identities and resident wishes to an unacceptable degree.
5. We believe that the recommendations from the 2003 review by the Boundary Committee for England, LGBCE's predecessor, struck a key balance between respecting community identity and maximising electoral equality. As a result, the current arrangements have operated successfully and are popular with residents, as well as having cross party support amongst local district councillors. However, we understand that improvements in electoral equality need to be made.
6. We will first set out arguments why Oadby and Wigston should remain separate. We will then follow this with sections that argue, given that Oadby and Wigston should remain separate, that Oadby should remain as a two member division and that by utilising the splitting of polling districts in Wigston, LBGCE can construct three divisions that increase electoral equality while respecting community identities.
7. A key piece of evidence we will present is the views given by residents at the Borough's resident forums. A report detailing Oadby and Wigston Borough Council's consultation on the boundary review is attached as Appendix A. It explains how these forums operate and records the responses given by residents when consulted on this issue.



Oadby and Wigston must not Share Electoral Divisions

8. The most controversial proposal in the draft recommendations is the Oadby South and Wigston East Division, a two member division that encompasses parts of both Oadby and Wigston. This is unacceptable to residents from both towns.

9. In the electoral review technical guidance document, sections 4.37 to 4.44 set out how LGCE aims to respect community identities in its recommendations. The Oadby South and Wigston East division falls short of these aspirations in numerous ways. Key examples include:

i) **Separate Community Identities**

The towns of Oadby & Wigston are two separate townships. Until 1974 they operated as separate urban district councils. Even now, residents when interviewed would say they live in either Oadby or Wigston not both. Someone who is elected in Oadby would not be elected in Wigston, and vice versa.

ii) **Separate Community interests**

The towns of Oadby and Wigston have their own education systems, health services, libraries, swimming pools, places of worship and local community organisations, such as stakeholder groups, rotaries, civic societies and town charities. The services being used by residents in Wigston will be different to the ones being used by residents in Oadby, and vice versa.

iii) **Strong and identifiable Boundaries**

Oadby and Wigston are separated by a racing course in the north and a green wedge in the south. There is a geographical disconnect between the two. We would have expected this to be considered a strong natural boundary under LGCE rules. In comparison, the two member division's boundaries do not at all reflect natural boundaries.

iv) **Separate Resident Forums and Budgets**

As detailed in Appendix A, there are three Residents Forums in Oadby and Wigston, one for each community. The different forums not only deal with separate issues, they each also have their own budgets. This two member division would contain parts of the Borough represented by each of the three forums.



v) **Transport Links.**

This is only a single road that directly connects Oadby with Wigston. Someone travelling from the south of Oadby to the south of Wigston would need to travel north to reach this road, and then travel south again. There are also very poor public transport links between the towns of Oadby & Wigston. The buses between the two are irregular and expensive. The Council will often provide services in each town, rather than expecting residents to travel between the two.

- 10.** Keeping Oadby and Wigston separate is a position held by residents in both towns and is cross party. We expect that submissions from other political parties will strongly agree with us on this point. We also expect you to receive strong opposition to this two member division from the majority of residents and community groups that write in to this consultation.

Oadby should remain as a Two Member Division

- 11.** Should you agree that Oadby and Wigston should remain separate, this would lead you to a second question: Should Oadby remain as a two member division or be split into two single member divisions? We argue that it should remain as a two member division.
- 12.** In the 2003 review, the BCE recommended that Oadby become a two member division, agreeing that “[a two member] *Oadby division would provide improved electoral equality, compared to ... two single-member Oadby divisions*” and also agreeing that “[a two member] *division would better reflect community identity by proposing to include the whole Oadby community within one division.*” Little has changed in Oadby since then.
- 13.** The division has operated successfully for over 10 years. There is cross party support for it amongst district councillors and attendees at the residents forum voted unanimously in favour of keeping it as it is. The LGBCE should take this as a strong endorsement of its predecessors’ decision. (See Appendix A)
- 14.** There is also strong cross party support for keeping Oadby as a two member division amongst district councillors. The issue has been twice debated on at the Borough Council meetings on 16th June and on 8th December. On both occasions, our conservative colleagues on the Borough Council voted alongside us in favour of keeping Oadby as a two member division.



15. Where there has been opposition to keeping Oadby as a two member division, it has usually come from individuals and organisations from outside the Borough, who have tended to argue from a generalised opposition to two member divisions in principle, rather than from a detailed appraisal of how it has actually operated in Oadby.

16. To summarise, we argue that:

- i) Oadby has operated well as a two member division.
- ii) The town has changed little since the last review. The reasons given for the BCE decision back in 2004 still apply.
- iii) It is not possible to split Oadby into even divisions with natural boundaries.
- iv) There is strong support for keeping Oadby as a two member division within the Borough, from local residents and also with cross party support from district councillors.

17. We therefore urge LGBCE to keep Oadby as a two member division.

Splitting Wigston into Three Equal Divisions

18. Should you agree that Oadby and Wigston should remain separate, you would then need to recommend three divisions in the Wigston area. This presents a severe challenge in terms of electoral equality. Even if you were to maximise electoral equality by creating a three member division, the best you could achieve is -11%.

19. The existing divisions have variances of -15%, -15%, and -3%. This means that two divisions would have a variance greater than the target of 10%. However, as stated before, this is by and large inevitable due to the size of Wigston's electorate. There are ways to reduce this inequality, such as LCC's proposals from July, but we would oppose changes that made small gains in electoral equality at the expense of respecting community identities and the wishes of local voters.

20. South Wigston is a distinct community to Wigston. While the distinction is far milder than the separation between Oadby and Wigston, they are still distinct communities with their own shops and services. South Wigston is covered by polling districts Q, R and S, which form a district ward with the same name. If community identity was the only consideration then we would recommend that a division be formed by these three polling stations, but due to the need for electoral equality, this would not be possible.

21. One of the key results to come back from the consultation and resident forums (Appendix A) is how strongly the residents in Little Hill identify themselves as a community, covered by polling districts M and N. When the Borough consulted on proposals that placed these polling



districts in different divisions, there was strong opposition voiced at the residents forum. (This prompted a small rethink of the proposals in our previous submission)

- 22.** The proposed Wigston South division in the draft recommendations is successful in keeping South Wigston as whole community, but also splits Little Hill. We would recommend that you instead use polling district O for the Wigston South division rather than N.
- 23.** Like in Oadby, the recommendations from the 2003 review have been popular and successful, with strong support from residents and cross party support amongst district councillors. However, we understand that LGBCE are required improve the electoral equality in the area.
- 24.** We note that in the draft recommendations, LGBCE have demonstrated a willingness to split polling districts in order to improve electoral equality. We believe this may be necessary to achieve the best level of electoral equality and will support any solution that keeps the South Wigston and Little Hill communities intact.
- 25.** We therefore urge LGBCE to divide Wigston into three divisions, to be as equal as possible, while ensuring that polling districts Q, R and S are kept in the same division and that the same is done for M and N.

Summary and Conclusion

- 26.** The proposals for Oadby and Wigston in the LGBCE draft recommendations would maximise electoral equality within the Borough but at a cost of abandoning any considerations around natural boundaries, community identities and, most importantly, considerations of what the local residents themselves desire.
- 27.** Divisions encompassing parts of both Oadby and Wigston in particular are unacceptable. Oadby and Wigston have very strong and distinct community identities and divisions such as the proposed Oadby South and Wigston East Division would be unacceptable to residents from both towns.
- 28.** The existing divisions have variances of -15%, -15%, -3% and -3%. The draft recommendations would change this to -9%, -9%, -9%, and -7% - an improvement, but a fairly minor improvement. We maintain that local resident wishes should outweigh statistics, especially considering how small these improvements in electoral equality are.
- 29.** In the last boundary review back in 2003, the BCE took a balanced approach that considered community identity as well as electoral equality. The result was a set of recommendations that have proved to



operate successfully and is popular with the residents. The strong response from residents at town forums is a testament to the excellent work done by the LGBCE's predecessor in that review.

- 30.** If we were limited to working with existing polling districts we would recommend that LGBCE stick with the status quo as it provides the best balance between electoral equality and respecting community identities. However, the draft recommendations have demonstrated LGCBE's willingness to split polling districts to improve electoral equality. This opens the door to an opportunity to achieve the best of both worlds.
- 31.** We believe that it would be possible for the LGBCE to construct a solution that respects community identities and the wishes of local residents while also improving electoral equality. This would involve retaining Oadby as a two member division and the utilisation of splitting polling districts in Wigston to build three equal divisions that are respectful of community identities.
- 32.** We therefore urge the LGBCE to keep Oadby as a two member division and to divide Wigston into three divisions, to be as equal as possible, while keeping the South Wigston and Little Hill communities intact.

Oadby & Wigston Borough Council



The Local Government Boundary Commission for England Electoral Review of Leicestershire County Council.

A response to proposed Boundary Commission recommendations from Oadby and Wigston Borough Council Resident Forum Members –**Consultation Write Up**

Version	0.1
Author	Veronika Quintyne
Approver	Head of Service ? / Councillor J.Boyce ?
Date for Approval/Date Approved	21 July , 2015
Agreed circulation of this version	To all those people who attended the three resident forum workshops

Version	Date	Receiver	Comment
0.1	9 th July , 2015	Veronika Quintyne	Initial draft
0.2	10 th July,2015	Veronika Quintyne	2 nd initial draft for review
0.3	?	?	Complete version

1. Introduction to the report

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is reviewing the size and boundaries of council electoral divisions:- i.e. the areas which the elected County Councillor will represent.

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 allowed the County Council to request the Commission to carry out an electoral review with the aim of providing single-member wards across the whole Leicestershire authority.

The Review aimed to ensure that each Leicestershire County Councillor represents roughly the same number of voters and that ward boundaries reflect the interests and identities of local communities.

On 12 May 2015, a first period of consultation for a pattern of wards for Leicestershire County Council began.

Between 12 May 2015 and 21 July 2015, comments were invited on the proposed ward boundary changes for the Borough of Oadby and Wigston.

In October 2015 draft recommendations concerning these boundary recommendations are to be released for comment by the Leicestershire County Council.

2. Introduction to the Resident Forum Consultation Events

The Borough of Oadby and Wigston has three resident Forums. One in Oadby, one in Wigston and one in South Wigston.

The remit of these three Resident Forums are:

- **To increase public involvement in public services**
- **To help shape the Council's policies for public services**
- **To challenge and give feedback on the performance of public services**
- **To promote community cohesion**
- **To report to the relevant Council committees**

At the three Resident Forum meetings, residents were invited to provide verbal and written feedback to a series of questions regarding their thoughts on the proposed Oadby and Wigston Borough ward boundary changes.

The three questions were:

- **Q: How do you feel about the fact that the Borough of Oadby and Wigston is recommended to keep to 5 County Councillors?**
- **Q: What do you think of the electoral division proposals to provide roughly equal numbers of electoral voters in each ward division by bringing them together? Should this happen or remain unchanged. If so, Why?**
- **Q.How. appropriate do you feel the current number of 55 County Councillors is for the size of the Leicestershire region? Why do you feel this?**

Residents did not feel the last question really was relevant to Oadby and Wigston although the stated they would like to know who the 55 county councillors are and whether such a number provided value for money.

The residents were also informed that they could also access an online survey on the following link to take part in the County Council survey to capture their views about the proposed ward boundary changes and feedback on the review processes and procedures, in order to identify improvements that can be made.

<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/east-midlands/leicestershire/leicestershire-county-council>

The Residents were also informed that:

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England would consider the proposals it receives from the County Council and others and would make its draft recommendations for Leicestershire.

In October 2015 people will be able to comment on the draft recommendations until December and final recommendations are expected in March 2016.

The Boundary Commission recommendations will come into effect in May 2017 when the next County Council elections are due to be held.

3. Outcomes from the Resident Forums consultation events

Consultation

What residents said?	What residents thought needed to be got right?
The change to Oadby is bound to change the feel of the division	The Boundary Commission must ensure it has paid proper attention to the natural community identities of the three areas of Oadby and Wigston in considering the proposals. Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston.
South Wigston feels less like a community and seems to be more about 9,000 people.	
Don't want Little Hill split in two.	
Oadby is already a two member ward and therefore the change is not necessary.	
Is the prediction of the numbers in each ward based on planning applications?	
Do places like Coalville have two elected members in each ward?	
Oadby residents were in unanimous agreement about keeping Oadby as a two member ward.	
The proposal doesn't make for logic in terms of putting together the estates of Grange, Manor.	
Don't split Launde Road, Uplands Road, Parkwood and the old part of Oadby Brocks Hill estate.	
The figures for Washbrook don't seem particularly sensible.	
Keeping 5 Councillors for Oadby and Wigston is a fair idea	
Having 5 Councillors is better than 4.	

Don't split Little Hill split in two.	
Waste of public money	
The system is working fine as it is.	
Don't fix what isn't broken	

4. Resident Forum Consultation Event Dates

Resident forum meetings	Meeting dates	Numbers attending
Oadby	July 8 th , 2015	32
South Wigston	July 9 th , 2015	15
Wigston	June 22 nd , 2015	30

5. Conclusion and Next steps

- Overall there was a sense of residents wanting to maintain 5 elected member representation on the County Council. Keep the status quo was the general comment.
- Information will be provided to residents following a request; on how the other Leicestershire Borough Councils have sought to divide up the electors within a– or + tolerance.
- Some residents were not clear on how the boundary changes would affect them at street level
- Residents, regardless of whether they attended the Resident Forum meetings will be able to access feedback about this consultation on the Council website and through attendance at future Resident Forum meetings.

6. Recommendations

Keep five divisions and five elected County Councillors for the Borough of Oadby and Wigston.

7. Key Proposed Recommendations by the Boundary Commission Appendix 1

- The current voting electorate for Oadby & Wigston is: 45,240 and expected to rise to 45,909 by 2021.
- The Borough is entitled to 5 Seats on the County Council. This will not change.
- The predicted borough average is 9,181 which are 803 or 8% lower than the County average of 9,984.
- This causes a problem in having 5 divisions created acceptable to the Boundary Commission tolerance of +/-10% of the County average.

Current Electoral Divisions are: Proposed change of Divisions to:

Oadby	Wigston Bushloe
Wigston Poplars	Wigston Poplars
Wigston Bushloe &	Wigston South Division
South Wigston	Oadby Uplands Grange & Oadby Washbrook

- The new proposal ensures 3 of the electoral divisions are within the +/- 10%, one at 11% and one at 12%
- The new electoral divisions would ensure that 3 of the proposed electoral divisions are within the +/-10% tolerance, one at 11% and one at 12%. This is the favoured option by the County Council
- The proposal is to split Wigston All Saints and Wigston St Wolstan`s. This makes it then on par with the other borough wards.
- Wigston Bushloe Division
- This Division in essence is the majority , 72%, of the existing electoral division of Wigston Bushloe with the polling district 1, Wigston St Wolstan`s No 2, which is part of Wigston St Wolstan`s borough ward added to it

- Wigston Poplars
- Division .This proposed division is the majority, 75%, of the existing Wigston Poplars electoral division with the addition of polling district O, Wigston Fields No.1, of Wigston Field borough ward. This proposal brings together the whole of the Wigston Field borough ward.
- Wigston South Division
- It`s proposed to make up this division with the whole of the ward of South Wigston and the remaining 28% of the existing Wigston Bushloe division.
- Oadby Uplands Grange Division.
- The proposal is to join Oadby Grange and Oadby Uplands
- Oadby Washbrook Division.
- The proposal is to join up the wards of Oadby Brocks Hill, Oadby St Peter`s and Oadby Woodlands.

8. Map of proposed ward changes -

Appendix 2

