

Rowlands Castle Parish Council

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Emily Starkie - Review Officer (East Hampshire)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Sent by Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

28 February 2018

Dear Madam

Response to Further Limited Draft Consultation on LGBCE's Review of East Hampshire District Council (Ref: Southern Wards of Horndean and Rowlands Castle)

Rowlands Castle Parish Council (RCPC) writes further to its response of 11 December 2017 to LGBCE's original consultation on its review of East Hampshire. We note LGBCE is now conducting a further limited consultation on proposals for Horndean and Rowlands Castle.

We strongly object to the further proposals to incorporate even more parts of Horndean with Rowlands Castle and surrounding areas to create a new Ward of Horndean Kings, Blendworth and Rowlands Castle, to be represented by 3 district cllrs. In this proposed new Ward, roughly two-thirds of the electorate would live in Horndean and one third in Rowlands Castle and the surrounding areas. We believe this would adversely impact Rowlands Castle and its electorate in terms of democratic representation and a sense of community.

As stated in our letter to EHDC of 6 February 2018, we understand LGBCE has yet to consider it has received sufficient evidence of community identity to justify a Rowlands Castle Ward with 15% more electors than the average for East Hampshire. In addition to the arguments made in our response of 11 December, we now aim to provide such evidence. We remain of the firmly-held view that Rowlands Castle should continue to be a separate Ward (to include Finchdean and Idsworth) and be represented by one councillor at district level.

The following demonstrates the strong sense of community identity and cohesiveness that encompasses the Parish of Rowlands Castle (including Finchdean and Idsworth), and separates and differentiates it from Horndean. This identity and cohesiveness would be best served by a single District Councillor to represent the residents of the parish and their interests alone. The evidence for this is summarised as follows:

1. Consultation on LGBCE's draft recommendations in 2017 This showed no support from residents of either Rowlands Castle or Horndean to be in the same Ward. Throughout the District there was a strong preference for single-councillor wards, including from political parties, current district cllrs and parish and town councils.
2. Rowlands Castle Vision Unlike Horndean, Rowlands Castle is developing a Neighbourhood Plan which defines a vision that the Parish's separate identity, character and distinctiveness should be maintained. The opinion of the whole Parish was sought in deciding whether to proceed with such a Plan and the overwhelming majority of responders voted in favour of doing so. The Plan area is formally designated as the whole Parish, including Finchdean & Idsworth. The Plan is being led by a Steering Group, made up entirely of residents of the Parish.
3. South Downs National Park (SDNP) In terms of geographical area, 60% of Rowlands Castle Parish is within the SDNP, including the hamlets of Finchdean & Idsworth. Rowlands Castle village is also considered a 'gateway' to the Park, especially because of its visitor

facilities including station. This requires a district cllr with specific knowledge of the Park and how it works. Such considerations risk being lost within the proposed enlarged Ward where district cllrs are likely to focus on where the majority of the population live ie in Horndean.

4. Rowlands Castle Planning Documents Rowlands Castle has demonstrated its sense of community identity over the years in developing such documents e.g. Village Design Statement 2000, Parish Plan 2008 and Landscape Character Assessment of 2012. All of these reflect only the area of the Parish and are material considerations when planning applications are considered. It is now developing a Neighbourhood Plan as stated above.
5. Rowlands Castle Community Organisations. There are many organisations in the Parish which are led by residents to represent and encourage the interests of other residents and their well-being, and to enhance the life of the Parish. These include the Parish Council itself, Rowlands Castle Association (RCA), Rowlands Castle Good Neighbours, Rowlands Castle Women's Institute, Rowlands Castle Flood Action Group, Rowlands Castle U3A, Rowlands Castle Historical Society, Rowlands Castle Luncheon Club, Rowlands Castle Painting Society and Rowlands Castle Gardening Club.

The RCA publishes a magazine 3 times a year full of local news which is circulated to all 1,200 dwellings in the Parish, including Finchdean and Idsworth. It also organises the annual Firework event at the Recreation Ground. Rowlands Castle is also developing a Heritage Centre, initially on-line and with plans for a permanent base within the Parish.

None of these organisations refer to Horndean in their name, nor do they look to Horndean for their membership.

6. St John's CEC Primary School. Rowlands Castle has one primary school whose catchment area is the Parish of Rowlands Castle. It enjoys much support and respect from residents and it is regarded as an important community facility and asset. Of the 209 pupils, most come from within the catchment area and only two live in Horndean at present. With new development of c 150 dwellings within the Parish, it is anticipated all children will come from within the catchment area in future.
7. Rowlands Castle Community Assets. The Parish Council owns (either in its own right or as sole charitable trustee) and is responsible for various land and buildings around the Parish, including The Green, the Parish Hall, the Recreation Ground, the War Memorial, King's Stone and Rowlands Copse. These are all widely used by residents.
8. The Village Green. This is a legally-registered Green, reputedly the largest in Hampshire, and it is a focal point within the village and wider Parish. Residents of all ages meet, walk dogs and exercise horses on and around it. Three of the 5 public houses within the Parish are adjacent to or very near the Green. It forms the basis for the Conservation Area, within which it lies. It hosts the annual Village Fair, which is designed to bring the whole community together and raise funds for Parish causes. The Fair takes up the whole of The Green and lasts all day and on into an evening music event. It also hosts an annual May Day Picnic, a more informal get together for residents, and Armistice Day commemoration.
9. Parish Hall. Rowlands Castle Parish Hall was built in 1914 and hosts a variety of regular and one-off events. Many of the local organisations listed at point 4 above use it for their regular meetings. It is also used by our local Montessori Nursery and the monthly Rowlands Castle Craft Fayres. It is a registered CIO, for which RCPC is the sole trustee. RCPC also holds its monthly meetings there.
10. Rowlands Castle Recreation Ground. This is a large green space widely used by Parish residents of all ages for sports and fitness activities, dog-walking, other leisure activities. It has a pavilion, tennis courts, several football pitches, a cricket square, a children's play

area, outdoor gym equipment and public WCs for patrons. It is also a registered CIO, for which RCPC is also the sole trustee.

11. Churches. There are 4 local churches and chapels which act not only as places of worship but also as focal points for village events and gatherings. As well as services, many of these host weekly 'café' meetings, exercise classes and social evenings. One of them, St Hubert's Idsworth, is the subject of a major renovation project at present to preserve what is, in places, a 1000-year old building. Rowlands Castle has been enthusiastic in its support.
12. Rowlands Castle Community Facilities. The residents of Rowlands Castle (including Finchdean and Idsworth) are well served by many facilities within the boundaries of the Parish and do not need to travel to Horndean to obtain them. These include a doctor's surgery and pharmacy, Londis shop with an extensive range of goods, a café, a hardware store and post office, 5 pubs/restaurants, a petrol station, 2 garages, a hair-dressing salon, an estate agent, a solicitor, a golf club, allotments, a care home, a veterinary surgery and various accommodation on offer for visitors. A crematorium and local hospital are nearby, neither of which are in or near Horndean. For any facilities not available in Rowlands Castle, residents usually travel southwards, to Havant, Emsworth or even Chichester.
13. Finchdean and Idsworth. Both hamlets rely on the geographically close community facilities, assets and public transport facilities in Rowlands Castle and would benefit from being in a Rowlands Castle Ward. Both are represented on the Rowlands Castle Parish Council. Incorporating these hamlets into the proposed new Ward would likely detrimentally reduce theirs and the wider Rowlands Castle Parish's overall significance
14. Boundaries of Rowlands Castle. There are physical features including large tracts of open countryside and woodland that form a natural barrier and boundary between Rowlands Castle and Horndean. East Hants District Council also regards the two settlements as being very different and distinct in nature. The distance between the settled area of Rowlands Castle Parish and that of Horndean is 2.5km and is separated by a golf course and The Holt Forest, part of the South Downs National Park. Finchdean is some 3km away 'as the crow flies' from Horndean, despite being the part of the Parish closest to Blendworth, from which it is separated by open countryside and woodland within the National Park.
15. Transport Links. The only transport links between the settled areas of Rowlands Castle and Horndean are two roads, neither of which has a pavement for pedestrians and along neither of which is there a bus service.
16. Sports and Youth Activities. Rowlands Castle has its own tennis club, football clubs and cricket team, all of whom play at the Recreation Ground. The Parish also has its own Scouts/Guides Hut with a flourishing membership list.

In recent official planning documents, East Hants District Council itself categorises Rowlands Castle and Horndean very differently, with Rowlands Castle described as a "small local service centre" with "a well-defined large settlement with an attractive village centre. It has a good range of local services and facilities including a mainline railway station". In contrast, Horndean is described as a "large local service centre putting it in the market town category".

It is vital for Rowlands Castle Parish to have its own district councillor to properly represent its residents and their interests at district level and who is aware of local spatial planning needs. This would mean the electorate can identify with a specific individual elected by them as their representative with clear channels of communication. The Ward Cllr would also be clear as to their remit and accountability. Representation of one enlarged ward by 3 separate cllrs also means there is a significant risk that all three such cllrs would be drawn from Horndean, thereby disadvantaging Rowlands Castle in its representation at district level. District Cllrs also strongly influence the spending of developers' contributions which are allocated by Parish, so it is

preferable for cllrs to be very familiar with the community and motivated to represent it to the best of their abilities.

Even the proposed Ward name of Horndean Kings, Blendworth and Rowlands Castle is not compatible with the need to maintain identity and is too long to be easily recognised or remembered by the electorate.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your further Consultation on this matter and we hope we have made clear the distinct community identity of Rowlands Castle Parish.

Yours faithfully



Lisa Walker
Clerk to Rowlands Castle Parish Council

CC: D Cllr Malcolm Johnson (for Rowlands Castle Ward)
T Horwood (Exec Director, East Hants District Council)
Rowlands Castle Parish Councillors

Enc: Appendix to RCPC's Response to Further Limit Draft Consultation