

## **Consultation on the Proposal from Eastleigh BC, Fareham BC Havant BC Portsmouth CC, Southampton CC, Hart DC and Rushmoor DC**

Known as '**Option 1A**' and has 5 Unitary Authorities in total:

**North:** Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor.

**Mid:** East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester, (less 11 parishes from all four areas).

**South East:** Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth, (plus 3 parishes of East Hampshire and 1 parish of Winchester).

**South West:** Eastleigh, Southampton, (plus 4 parishes from New Forest and 3 parishes from Test Valley).

**Isle of Wight:** Isle of Wight to remain unchanged.

Firstly, every respondent has to tell the Government about themselves:

1. What is your name?

2. Are you responding as an individual or providing an official response on behalf of an organisation?

Individual or Official response on behalf of an organisation

3. Have you been invited to respond as a named consultee?

Yes or No

4. In which council area is your address? (if you are responding as an individual this is your home address. If you are responding as an organisation this is your organisation address)

Hampshire County Council

5. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please let us know the organisation's name:

6. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please let us know your position within the organisation e.g. Chairman

7. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please select the type of organisation from the options below:

Business / Education / Health

Local government - parish/town council or other

Other public sector - National body / Police and Fire / Voluntary sector

Other

8. What is your email address?

Secondly, read statement on no personal data and tick the box before proceeding with the consultation

The sections for each proposal in this consultation include free text boxes where you can explain your answers.

Then comes the questions about each of the 4 proposals on which the Government is seeking views. There are dropdown answers for each question

For this proposal, there is an extra question and also an extra free-text box to fill in.

### **Rowlands Castle Parish Council responses:**

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?

Strongly disagree

2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?

Strongly disagree

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?

Strongly disagree

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support?

Strongly disagree

*More information - As of 19 Nov 25, within the Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton area, Southampton City Council had received in-principle Exceptional Financial Support to support their 2025/26 budget. This council will not necessarily be in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support in future financial years.*

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?

Strongly disagree

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?

Strongly disagree

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?

Strongly disagree

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?

Strongly disagree

9. If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal.

Text box comments as follows:

Rowlands Castle Parish Council considers Option 1A to be the worst of the 4 options presented for consultation. Not only is the Mid-Hants UA too big a geographical area encompassing both National Parks with the associated drawbacks of doing so, the Option also represents a blatant land grab by the City Councils and adjacent Councils taking some rural and semi-rural parishes out of their original district into the City Councils urban fold and totally dominating those parish populations. This will also require boundary changes to be implemented and it will really annoy residents when Government should be looking for a smooth transition with the minimum of disruption and local antagonism. The 4<sup>th</sup> Criteria for unitary local government within the Guidance from the SoS stated that proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together and been informed by local views. No contact was made with either the Parish Council or residents of Rowlands Castle to seek our opinions on this specific proposal (or with other parish councils we believe) and it is no surprise that the vast majority of our residents are firmly against it. There was a general survey undertaken across the region and it showed that the Option 1A was the least supported, albeit with a low response rate for the consultation.

One of the big points made in this proposal was that in the South East there was a lot of travel into the Portsmouth area from the Southern Parishes of Rowlands Castle, Horndean and Clanfield. That may be true but many of our residents also go north for work towards Guildford, Woking and the urban area stretching north towards London. Others go west to Southampton beyond the proposed South-East UA and east towards Chichester. A considerable proportion of residents are retired and have no need to travel anywhere on a daily basis. There is no justification in pulling the Southern Parishes into the proposed South-East UA other than to grab what is left of our rural environment for yet more housing. (It has to be said in our parishes that there will be precious little land left to build on once the current approved and proposed developments are complete).

Two of the 7 Councils involved in this proposal (Rushmoor and Hart) lie miles away from the Southern Parishes and will be unaffected by this Option 1A. It is not clear why they supported it

and their support should be disregarded as being inappropriate when they have no skin in the game. The adoption of this Option 1A would be a betrayal of our residents wishes to remain part of a mid or north Hampshire UA, clear of the urban environment and connected to the rural areas to the north, including the South Downs National Park, which covers more than 50% of Rowlands Castle Parish. There is no affinity looking south into an urban environment where those in authority have little knowledge or understanding of the rural environment and the National Park. Parts of Clanfield and Horndean Parishes also lie within the National Park and that adds to the argument for the parishes remaining with the rest of East Hampshire as it merges into a new UA.

We absolutely disagree with the statement in Option 1A that “communities in the parishes that would become part of the new UAs would benefit from remaining with their aligned urban centres, with much more common community interests reflecting where they live their lives, rather than being part of a large rural authority” For the Southern Parishes in East Hampshire we have no aligned urban centres and no common community interests with Havant or Portsmouth as our nearest urban centres. The urban councils have made assumptions that are not correct and we see no added value in being moved to be part of an urban environment when we are semi-rural to rural and our communities live their lives where they live, away from the cities. We have different priorities and challenges and a mostly urban UA will not have the interest in the border rural parishes that a proper mixed UA such as the South West with New Forest balancing Southampton & Eastleigh as in Option 2 or the Alternative Option involving Test Valley as well.

We consider that, to achieve an effective and easily delivered changeover to the new Unitary Authorities (UAs), it will be by far the best thing to maintain the proven upper-tier services currently delivered by HCC and Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils through the transition period, thus having 3 mainland UAs is the best solution. The creation of an additional provider of upper-tier services in a new UA will be extremely expensive and cause immense disruption to services that are crucial for the many vulnerable members of our communities.

10. This proposal is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary change. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change?

Strongly disagree

11. If you would like to, please use this free text box to explain your answer to question 10.

Text box to add further comments:

Rowlands Castle Parish Council is absolutely opposed to any boundary changes affecting the parish and wishes, along with Horndean and Clanfield PCs, to remain within the East Hampshire boundary as the District Council migrates to its new UA. As a semi-rural parish, with over half our area lying within the SDNP, we look north for our engagement with higher levels of local government and have an excellent relationship with the planning officers at EHDC and the SDNPA and also good working relationships with HCC officers on highways and other matters. They know us and we know them. Any of the other three UA options will suit the Southern Parishes in East Hampshire, albeit the HCC/EHDC Alternative Option is the best as argued in our submission for that option. Boundary changes will add unnecessary costs to the implementation of the LGR and require us to establish new working relationships totally unnecessarily. The parishes will also be dominated by the urban mass to the south and the UAs urban councillors and officers, showing a gross imbalance between urban and rural interests. We expect to be ignored and overridden by those with urban interests.

In the Option 1A it was stated that “The survey showed residents in the parishes that would be impacted by boundary change were concerned about losing their rural character, increased urbanisation, and reduced influence over decisions. **These concerns are something that would need to be more clearly understood and addressed as we move forward**” That statement just demonstrates the lack of understanding by the Option 1A proposer Councils of the rural parishes strong dislike of this option. The residents have been quite clear about the key 3 issues, loss of rural character, increased urbanisation and worst of all reduced (probably greatly reduced)

influence over decisions. Those 3 points show why the Alternative Option with 3 mainland UAs, 2 of them nicely balanced between urban and rural and the third UA only urban, with all three based on existing centres of upper-tier services, really works well with Option 2 as an acceptable alternative.

We acknowledge that, specifically, Newlands Parish may well be better off moving into the South-East UA lying as it does lie check-by-jowl with urban Waterlooville within the existing Havant Borough Council area but that is an anomaly. The rest of us have no wish to be forced into the South-East UA and we have laid out arguments in the round above in the Section 9 free text box about this Option 1A.

The option does not set out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change. We receive almost no public services from the south but mostly from the north, from EHDC and from HCC and this would continue easily under either Option 1 or 2 or our preferred UA given in the Alternative Option.

To deliver effective and acceptable LGR in Hampshire and the IoW there needs to be minimum disruption to normal processes for residents and having to undertake boundary changes adds to the costs and goes against the democratic wishes of the majority of residents within each parish. This option should be dismissed as being without merit.

12. I confirm that I have not included any information that identifies an individual in the free text box.

Yes