



Committee	Full Council
Month	January 2024
Report Title	Essex County Council Boundaries Consultation
Report Author	Georgia Arnold Deputy Town Clerk
Attachments	July 2023 Full Council Report – ECC existing boundaries consultation phase one

Agenda item: 10

Summary

In Summer 2023, Essex County Council (ECC) started its two-phase consultation, revising its existing divisions and wards.

At the July 2023 SWTC Full Council meeting the attached officer report was presented and council resolved to respond to the first phase of the consultation as follows:

FC 106-23	<p>Essex County Council (ECC) border review consultation</p> <p>Council noted ECC is consulting on its existing borders and divisions with a two-phase consultation. It was Resolved:</p> <p>To respond to the consultation with suggestions 2 and 3 listed in the written report attached to the agenda, extracted below for information:</p> <p><i>“2- To extend the Saffron Walden border to encompass the Rosconn site, in line with the parish border review.</i></p> <p><i>3- Request an additional county councillor is created and the existing Uttlesford divisions are re-organised to make them more equal in their representation.”</i></p>
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ECC has now launched phase two of the consultation which can be found online at <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/essex> closing 19 February 2024, seeking views on which proposals are supported or not.

The purpose of this report therefore is to consider how SWTC responds to the second phase of ECC’s border consultation.

ECC Proposal

For ease the ECC proposal for Uttlesford is copied below:

Under a Council size of 78, Uttlesford is allocated five councillors, with each division averaging a -1% electoral variance.

In addition to the Council's scheme, we received a proposal from Uttlesford Council Liberal Democrats for the divisions in this district.

Dunmow and Takeley

We received no alternative proposals for these divisions, which were proposed by both the Council and the Liberal Democrats. We have adopted these proposals as part of our draft recommendations.

We received a number of submissions from residents of the area around Dunmow commenting on proposals to place this area in a Parliamentary constituency with Braintree. Parliamentary constituencies are proposed by a separate body – the Boundary Commission for England – and are not a factor we can consider with regard to division or ward boundaries.

Stansted, Thaxted and Walden

Both schemes received for Uttlesford proposed identical Walden divisions, based around the town of Saffron Walden. The Liberal Democrats proposed a Thaxted division wrapping around Walden division to the south, west and east. The Council's proposal, in contrast, was for relatively more compact divisions, with Stansted division covering the north-west of the district, and Thaxted the north-east.

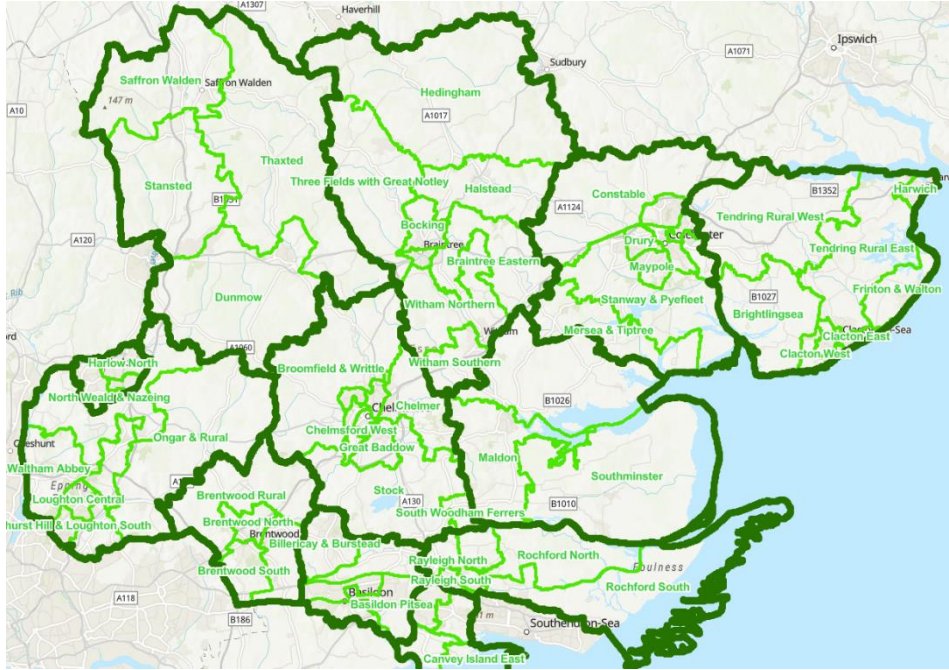
The Liberal Democrats' proposal would have allowed Henham and Elsenham parishes to be placed in a division with Stansted Mountfitchet. Evidence was provided regarding links between these areas, specifically healthcare and educational facilities. We considered this carefully, but do not consider that the evidence provided outweighs the disadvantages of a very large rural division, which would include more than 20 parishes.

At the suggestion of the Liberal Democrats, we have modified the Council's proposal in order to place Wendens Ambo parish, which includes the nearest rail station to Saffron Walden, in Walden division. We have also modified the Council's proposal in order to ensure that Newport ward is within a single division. We have achieved this by moving Widdington parish from Thaxted division into Stansted division. These changes still allow Stansted, Thaxted and Walden divisions to retain good electoral equality.

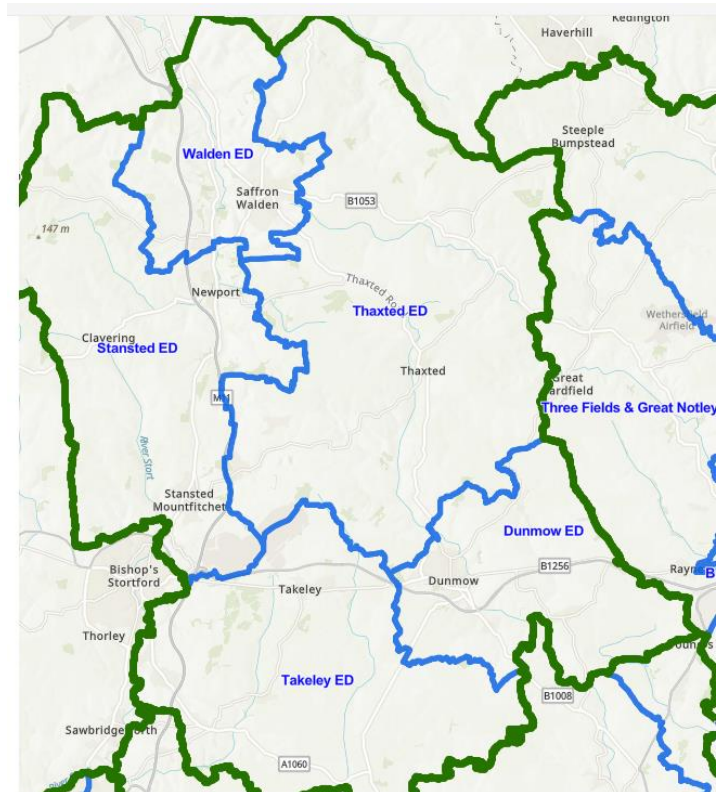
Saffron Walden Town Council provided a submission arguing for the size of the existing division to be reduced – this has been accomplished in our draft recommendations as a consequence of the move from the existing four divisions covering Uttlesford to five.

The Town Council also suggested an amendment to the boundary between Saffron Walden and Swards End parishes. We are unable to change external parish boundaries as part of this electoral review, but if a subsequent Community Governance Review led by Uttlesford District Council chooses to amend parish boundaries, we can adjust division (and district ward) boundaries to match.

Below illustrates the existing boundaries



Below illustrates the proposed new boundaries



The proposed revised boundary for Saffron Walden therefore:

- Removes the parishes west of Littlebury Green (Elmdon, Duddenhoe End, Arkesden) and these are added to Stansted Division.
- Additionally Little Walden is removed and added to Thaxted division

SWTC responded to phase one of the consultation seeking:

1. *An extension to extend the Saffron Walden border to encompass the Rosconn site, in line with the parish border review.*

At time of publishing the phase two consultation, ECC's proposal explains this cannot happen until the Uttlesford District Council (UDC) Community Governance Review (CGR) is concluded.

This has since concluded (which is noted within the January Full Council agenda) and UDC is ensuring the legal order is completed and submitted to the relevant statutory bodies - such as Ordnance Survey who will alter national mapping and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England who will publish a Consequential Amendment Order to re-align the district ward boundary between Saffron Walden (Shire Ward) and Ashdon Ward so the area of land transfers to the Saffron Walden Shire Ward.

Request an additional county councillor is created and the existing Uttlesford divisions are re-organised to make them more equal in their representation."

With the proposed boundary change the divisions will be more equally represented with the creation of a fifth southern division, Takeley.

Options

1. Do not respond to the second phase of consultation
2. Respond in objection of the proposals
3. Respond in support of the proposals

Recommendation

It is recommended to pursue with option 3 above, respond in support of the proposals, acknowledging the proposed boundaries are in line with SWTC's response to the first phase of consultation.

The supporting response should also include reference to the fact the UDC CGR has since completed, therefore confirmation is required to confirm the current Seward End site (planning application site UTT/21/2509/OP) will be transferred to the Saffron Walden division. (This should also be relayed to UDC.)

COPY REPORT PRESENTED TO FULL COUNCIL JANUARY 2024



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Report Author	Georgia Arnold
Attachments	None

Agenda item: 9

Summary

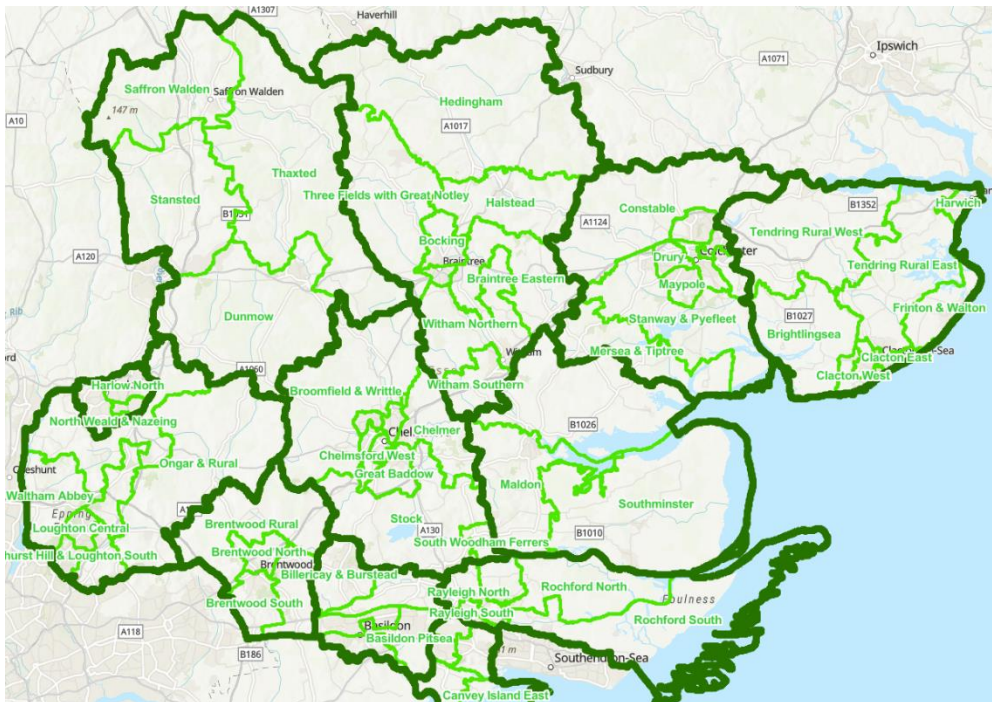
Essex County Council (ECC) is looking at reviewing its existing divisions and wards with a two-phase public consultation:

- Phase 1 – Initial consultation gathering comments and thoughts from communities.
- Phase 2 – Boundary recommendations are published and consulted on.

Phase 1 is currently being undertaken, closing on 31st July 2023.

Below is a map from ECC illustrating the current electoral boundaries in Essex.

To note this is only for the ECC divisions and not Uttlesford District Council, this is separate and there are currently no plans for a district review.



Recommendation

SWTC to respond to the consultation with one of the following options:

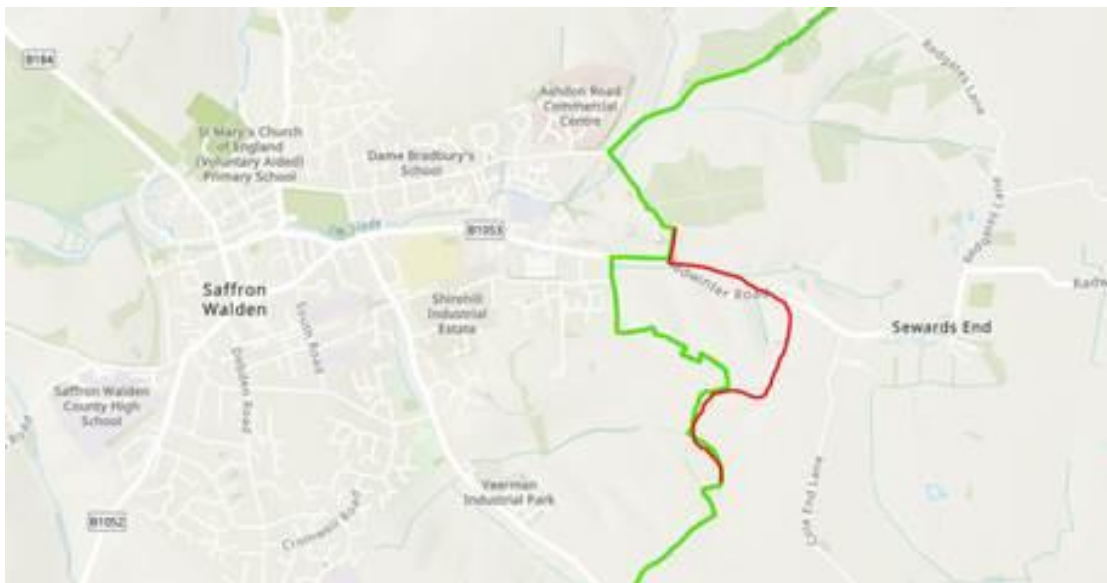
1. No comment or changes proposed.
2. To extend the Saffron Walden border to encompass the field along Radwinter Road, (commonly referred to as the Rosconn site which has been granted planning permission of 233 dwellings).

The rationale for this is because SWTC and Swards End Parish Council has previously jointly requested a parish border review, to extend the Saffron Walden border to encompass this field.

Future residents at this estate could therefore be associated with Saffron Walden Town councillors and Thaxted County Councillors.

Should the ECC border extend the Saffron Walden boundary to include this field, residents would therefore be associated with Saffron Walden Town Councillors and Saffron Walden County Councillor(s).

This border is illustrated below, red being the extension, green the existing.



3. To reduce the size of Saffron Walden's County division.

County Councillors on average should represent 14,891 electorate, Saffron Walden is significantly more with 17,175 electorate.

Neighbouring County divisions have an electorate of:

- Thaxted 14,871
- Stansted 16,961

Overall, Uttlesford has considerably more electors per county councillor than the average for Essex and it is proposed to increase the number of ECC councillors by 2. Increasing the number of Uttlesford ECC councillors from 4 to 5 would place each division about average, or just under.

It is proposed therefore that an additional Uttlesford county councillor is created, that the existing Uttlesford divisions are re-organised to make them as far as reasonably achievable the same size, and that in doing so as far as possible each comprises whole Uttlesford wards

4. Options 2 and 3 could be combined by both:

- Extending the Saffron Walden border to encompass the Rosconn site, in line with the parish border review.
- An additional county councillor is created and the existing Uttlesford divisions are re-organised to make them more equal in their representation.

To note at time of writing, it is not certain as to whether Uttlesford District Council has plans to review its borders and wards alongside ECC or at a future date. SWTC is awaiting a response from UDC to confirm.

Officer Recommendation

Council is asked to consider the above recommendations in its response to the ECC consultation, closing 31 July.