

ROYDON PARISH COUNCIL

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Cringle Oaks,
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Roydon,
Diss,
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IP22 5SB

25th October, 2017

The Electoral Service Manager,
SNDC,
Swan Lane,
Long Stratton, Norfolk,
NR15 2XE.

Dear Ms. Tovee-Galey,

I am writing on behalf of Roydon Parish Council to express our views on the proposed boundary changes between Roydon and Diss made by the Community Governance Review Committee (CGRC).

I must state from the outset that Roydon Parish Council are opposed to the alterations proposed for the following reasons:

1. When notice was given of the boundary review earlier this year, the question of possible changes was put to residents at a well attended annual Roydon parish meeting. All residents present were firmly opposed to any change, citing particularly loss of community cohesion and identity, being a village that can still support a shop, petrol station and pub. Lack of confidence in the governance of Diss Town Council was also expressed. Put to the vote on a show of hands, all present were against change.

As a result, the parish council made a simple submission stating they were opposed to any change, not commenting further since they were unaware of the extent of the proposed changes which were to be submitted.

2. Following publication of the CGRC's proposals, the September meeting of Roydon Parish Council was attended by approximately eighty residents, again all vehement

in their opposition for the same reasons as expressed at the parish meeting. This confirmed the view of the parish council that residents felt very strongly about this issue.

3. Since the September meeting of the council, residents have continued their opposition via letters to the press, social media, local radio, petitions and the formation of an action group. No parish councillor has been informed by any Roydon resident that they view the proposed changes favourably.
4. Discussion amongst councillors also finds unanimous opposition to the proposals for similar reasons to our residents. Roydon has a strong sense of individuality despite its proximity to Diss. Councillors are aware that the official guidance to the CGRC makes great play of the fact that the views of local people should be taken into account and that community cohesion and identity are factors of high importance. Both councillors and residents are perturbed by the fact that the proposed changes put forward by Diss Town Council to the CGRC were not communicated to either Roydon Parish Council or the residents prior to submission. It seems to the parish council that these proposals are entirely the idea of Diss Town Councillors with no support, or any comment, seeming to come from Diss residents.
5. The parish council is of the opinion that the proposed boundary changes are without any reason other than to take over 40% of Roydon's precept paying properties into Diss for the purpose of increasing the latter's tax base. Councillors are aware that the CGRC does not make decisions on the basis of finance but this would seem to be the only reason for the changes proposed. The Roydon residents included in the changes would move from one of the lowest precepts in South Norfolk to one of the highest.
6. The proposed changes also enclose extensive areas of open agricultural land which will become available to Diss for housing, especially to the north-west of the Louies Lane/Factory Lane axes. The community values the amenity which these open country spaces offer. Of particular concern is the possibility that building may take place in proximity to Roydon Fen, near Tottington Lane, a 49 acre nature reserve owned by Suffolk Wildlife Trust. This reserve is an intact remnant of the typical wetland environment of the Waveney Valley where, until the early 20th century, the villagers of Roydon harvested peat, reed and sedge. Housing next to such sites is always a threat to their integrity by way of such problems as malicious damage and disturbance. Roydon values the preservation of this historic landscape.

7. Roydon is recorded as a separate settlement in the Domesday Book, as is Diss, though Roydon can trace its settlement roots to earlier times containing excavated evidence of a Bronze Age settlement and cremation cemetery. Roydon has continued to value its history, the parish council stepping in to preserve a David Kindersley carved mural when the Aldrich Brothers' brush factory was demolished in the late 20th century so it could be preserved within the community. The significance of this historic link would become largely irrelevant if Brushmakers Way (off Factory Lane), where the factory once stood, were to become part of Diss, a further example of chipping away at Roydon's heritage.

8. It is accepted by our council that Diss is a hub for surrounding parishes providing amenities to a wide area, yet it is only Roydon that seems to have been singled out to contribute further to this. The neighbouring parish of Palgrave has close geographic proximity to Diss, like Roydon, but is fortunate in being protected by the County boundary! Roydon does not look to neighbouring parishes, for example, to fund its village hall or the common land Brewers Green (a county wildlife site, owned by a Roydon resident) which all are free to enjoy.

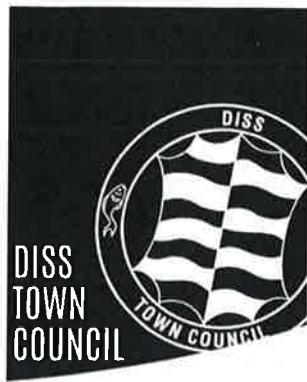
9. Roydon Parish Council can see no benefits to its residents if the proposed changes are implemented. If there are any, we would like to be informed what these may be by anyone who is aware of them. Diss has tried before, in 1979, to acquire part of Roydon parish, in the current vicinity of Appletree Lane. We are, once again, determined to protect the integrity of our community.

In conclusion, Roydon Parish Council request that the CGRC review its current proposals, having regard for the identity and wishes of the people of Roydon, as emphasised in its own guidance from government. We respectfully ask you to reject the boundary changes proposed.

Yours faithfully,



Paul J. Curson,
Chairman of Roydon Parish Council



TOWN CLERK
Ms D J Sarson, MILCM

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Please ask for: Deborah Sarson
Date: 27.10.2017
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Extension:

Electoral Services Team
South Norfolk Council
Cygnet Court
Long Stratton
Norwich, NR15 2XE

Dear Julia,

Subject: Community Governance Review Second Phase Consultation

In response to the first phase consultation, Diss Town Council proposed changes to the parish boundary between Diss and Roydon and to increase the number of councillors from 13 to 14 given current and projected population growth (based on current boundaries).

The Electoral Arrangements Review Committee (EARC) suggested accepting the proposal to increase the number of councillors to 14, which is reflective of the Town Council's view.

Rationale

The Longmeadow development, built since the previous Community Governance Review in 2002, straddles the boundary between Diss and Roydon and creates one of the 'anomalous parish boundaries' referred to by the Boundary Commission. This current review provides an opportunity to realign the boundary to clearly define Diss from Roydon.

The rationale for the boundary change proposals were:

- a) to provide an opportunity to define a clear 'green' belt between the two parishes which supports the principle of 'governance that reflects community identity' and is something which Roydon has often stated it wishes to retain
- b) to remove any confusion that exists about where Diss ends and Roydon starts
- c) so that facilities and services provided by Diss Town Council are all located within the parish boundary (eg Sports Ground, allotments).
- d) supports the principle of effective and convenient governance

Diss Town Council made these proposals in the best interests of the people of Diss. This is not about whether Diss Town Council can afford to deliver its facilities and services but about taking the opportunity to share the burden of cost for those services. There is an inherent unfairness that the people who live within the parish of Diss should be paying for facilities and services enjoyed by a wide catchment. Whilst that is the way 'the system' is set up and any system would always have an element of unfairness, Diss Town Council would be remiss in not taking the opportunity to put forward proposals to help share the burden by broadening the tax base, in the best interests of its electorate.

A proportion of properties in Roydon are located on the northwest edge of Diss forming part of the urban conurbation. In addition, the Longmeadow and Tottington Lane areas are clearly more physically linked to Diss. Most of these properties are closer to the town centre than a higher proportion of the properties located to the eastern edge of Diss.

On this basis, Diss Town Council believes that the proposed boundary changes would 'facilitate the efficient, effective and convenient delivery of local services and ensure...equitable and fair' governance for the people of Diss.

Roydon Parish Council has frequently expressed the view that it wishes to preserve the 'green belt' between Roydon and Diss, which Diss Town Council has always supported the principle of. However, the current boundary means that RPC actually seeks to preserve the 'green belt' between the village of Roydon and the urbanised part of Roydon on the edge of Diss that is, between Roydon and Roydon. This community governance review provides an opportunity to rectify this situation and provide a clear and sensible boundary between the parishes of Diss and Roydon.

Second Round Consultation

In response to the first-round consultation, the EARC proposed a more radical boundary change which in addition to more areas of land, included Tottington Lane.

Diss Town Council has formally agreed to the principle of these boundary proposal changes. In accordance with the Boundary Commission guidance, namely that 'A community governance review offers an opportunity to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries, tied to firm ground features, and remove the many anomalous parish boundaries that exist in England' (p 10), the Town Council has considered the 'firm ground features' to which the boundary could be aligned in support of the EARC's proposed boundary (see attached map).

Sincerely,



Deborah Sarson
Town Clerk
Diss Town Council

— PROPOSED BOUNDARY
— FIXED FEATURES
'ON THE GROUND'

