



Community Governance Review South Darley Parish Second Consultation

Dear Sirs,

South Darley Parish Council wishes to make the following representations concerning parish boundary and warding arrangements for the parish, following the decision of the Local Government Boundary Commission to include the South Darley Parish ward of Oker and Snitterton within the District Council ward of Matlock West. The representations relate to:

1. The District Council's proposal that the area of proposed new housing in Cawdor Quarry (known as Matlock Spa) should be transferred to Matlock Town, and
2. The District Council's proposal to request the Local Government Boundary Commission to make a related alteration to Matlock West and Bonsall & Winster wards.

The Parish Council strongly supports both of these proposals for the reasons given below.

1. Boundary Between South Darley and Matlock

South Darley is a long-standing rural parish with a distinct shared identity and history. It covers the four small rural settlements of Darley Bridge, Oker, Snitterton and Wensley which share common facilities such as parish church, primary school and village hall, and forming a coherent rural area. It would, therefore, be wrong to hive off Oker and Snitterton from South Darley and place them under a different representative jurisdiction. These two hamlets, containing about 50 houses, would be subsumed into the bulk of Matlock Town and their needs would be swamped by the differing needs of the urban area.

Furthermore, it should be noted that about half of Oker and Snitterton ward lies within the Peak District National Park and is thus subject to Peak Park planning rules. From a planning perspective, it would make sense to keep this together with the rest of South Darley Parish (around two-thirds of which lies in the Peak Park) rather than to move it to an essentially urban parish which has no Peak Park territory.

In a recent poll of South Darley residents' opinions of the Boundary Commission's decision to include Oker and Snitterton within the new Matlock West DDDC ward, 118 of the 121 respondents strongly objected to the decision.

Leaving Oker and Snitterton as a ward of South Darley, with its existing boundaries, would not be acceptable when the development of Cawdor Quarry progresses. Some 230 of the properties in the new development would lie within the parish, which would add about 550 residents to an existing parish population of just over 700.

In accordance with the Local Plan, there will be no direct vehicular access from the new development into the parish. The new development will form a coherent whole with common needs and would be expected to identify with the town of Matlock rather than the surrounding rural villages. To split the development arbitrarily in two, with half forming part of Matlock Town and half part of South Darley Parish would be contrary to common sense.

The District Council proposes to leave Oker and Snitterton within South Darley Parish, but to revise the boundary between South Darley and Matlock such that the whole of the new development at Cawdor Quarry lies within Matlock Town. The boundary would be redrawn to skirt around the development. No existing properties (other than the derelict Permanite plant)

would be affected by by this change. South Darley Parish would remain intact and the future housing development would be correctly located within Matlock Town.

South Darley Parish Council therefore strongly urges that this proposal be adopted.

2. Request to LGBC to Revise Matlock West and Bonsall and Winster Ward Boundaries

South Darley Parish Council is deeply concerned at the recommendation of the Local Government Boundary Commission for the division of South Darley Parish into two separate District Council wards.

As noted in the preceding section, South Darley is a long-standing rural parish with a distinct shared identity.

The parish at present forms part of the Winster & South Darley ward of the District Council. The whole of the existing ward consists of a coherent rural area, the residents of which have generally felt that their concerns are well represented on the District Council. To hive off two of the four settlements of South Darley and place them under a different representative jurisdiction flies in the face of an established common identity and shared history.

In their draft Recommendations of February 2021, the Commission stated that they *“did not consider the grouping of South Darley, in whole or in part, with Matlock All Saints to be desirable. Not only would this group one rural community of 584 electors with an urban community of 4,607, but the Peak District National Park covers about two-thirds of the former, creating potential issues relating to effective and convenient local government.”* It therefore came as a great surprise when the final recommendations cut South Darley in half, placing Oker and Snitterton in Matlock West.

When the Parish Council requested the views of the residents, 118 out of 121 responses said that, had they been consulted, they would have strongly objected to the proposal.

Under the currently proposed arrangement, Oker and Snitterton would be subsumed into the bulk of Matlock town in the Matlock West ward. The needs of these two hamlets, containing about 50 houses, would probably be swamped by the differing needs of the urban area.

If it goes ahead, the LGBC’s current proposal will require the Parish Council to discuss matters of concern with four District Councillors: one from Bonsall & Winster and three from Matlock West. A most unsatisfactory arrangement.

It is clear that the LGBC’s proposal contravenes two of the three main criteria: *“ensuring that the recommendations reflect community interests”*; and *“providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.”* Thus, it appears that the only reason was *“equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.”* The small number of electors in Oker and Snitterton cannot make a significant difference to the electors per councillor and such a difference is certainly not worth the detrimental effects of cutting South Darley Parish in two.

We therefore urge the District Council to request the Local Government Boundary Commission to make an alteration to Matlock West and Bonsall & Winster wards such that the boundary between them follows the revised boundary of Matlock Town at Cawdor Quarry and Oker and Snitterton form part of Bonsall & Winster.

Cllrs Haymes, Wallbank, Fuller, Glasson, Higham, Judson, Wayman and Wilks.

South Darley Parish Councillors