

Initial Submission from Natland Parish Council to the Community Governance Review - South Lakeland 2018/19

Introduction

Natland Parish Council (NPC) welcomes the opportunity to improve community governance in South Lakeland District. This Initial Submission was agreed at its meeting on 29 October 2018.

NPC is content with its present status, boundaries and electoral arrangements, but is aware that Kendal Town Council (KTC) is requesting that its boundaries be extended to encroach on Natland's in two broad areas: south of Natland Beck and south of Oxenholme. This submission will focus on them.

Land South of Natland Beck

Natland Beck is the existing natural boundary between Natland and Kendal civil parishes.

There is a new housing development in this area ("The Beeches"). It does not straddle the existing boundary but is well separated from it by a strip of distinctive semi-rural character with several dwellings and residents who have long associations with the community and village of Natland, with its church, village hall and primary school.

KTC has argued that its boundary should be aligned with the town's new development boundary as defined in the recently adopted Local Plan. The DCLG/LGBCE guidance on community governance reviews contains many aspects that should be considered, but alignment with a notional development boundary is not amongst them.

Likewise KTC's request to annex an area of employment land on the west side of Natland Road has no relevance to community governance and would separate dwellings further down Watercrock Lane from the rest of Natland. The former K Shoes, now Clarks, properties along Natland Road have been within both Natland's parish boundary and Kendal's development boundary for decades without any community significance.

Natland Parish Council feels it is competent and capable of providing effective representation for all its inhabitants that identify with the community of Natland. It offers significantly more councillors per elector than KTC would, with an absence of the party politics which is inappropriate to local government at this level. There is a community website and an annual report is delivered to every household with an invitation to participate democratically in parish affairs by attending the annual assembly of the Parish Meeting. That opportunity is not offered by KTC, although it is a legal requirement.

The views of the affected inhabitants must be sought and considered before any decision is taken about the annexation of land south of Natland Beck into Kendal.

Land South of Oxenholme

The idea that the two areas of land allocated for housing immediately south of Oxenholme Village should form part of the community of Oxenholme rather than of Natland has merit in terms of community governance. They comprise the Rochester Gardens development straddling the Kendal/Natland boundary to the east of the A65, and land south of Fell Close, within Natland but contiguous with the Kendal boundary, with planning consent for much-needed extra-care housing. Any new boundary should be drawn tightly around those land allocations and not include the long-standing dwellings in Natland parish between the A65 and The Helm.

But there is also merit in the idea that the thus enlarged community of Oxenholme would be better served by having its own parish council.

NPC has long recognised that Oxenholme is a community, separated from Kendal's built up area, with links to Natland through its church (in the same ecclesiastical parish), primary school (shared catchment area) and village hall (the Natland and Oxenholme Village Hall). But they are distinct communities and should not be merged.

Following a democratic process involving a general meeting of residents, the citizens of Oxenholme have recently established the Oxenholme Village Residents Group with Terms of Reference and a schedule of regular committee and residents' meetings. The existence of such an association indicates the potential for creating a parish council for Oxenholme that would better serve the needs of its electors. It would be closer to its community, have more councillors to identify, represent and meet its needs, and not have to compete for attention and resources with other communities within Kendal's vast urban population.

That would provide more effective and convenient governance for Oxenholme, reflecting its interests and identity.

Conclusion

Therefore Natland Parish Council:

- is firmly opposed to any annexation into Kendal of land south of Natland Beck, for the reasons given above, and
- requests South Lakeland District Council to seriously consider the feasibility and desirability of establishing a separate civil parish of Oxenholme as part of the current Community Governance Review.

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Clerk to Natland Parish Council

30/10/18