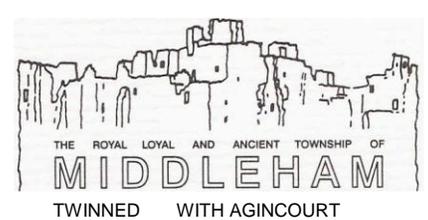


MIDDLEHAM TOWN COUNCIL



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Review Officer (Richmondshire)
LGBCE
14th Floor
Milbank Tower
London
SW1P 4QP

14th January 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

Richmondshire Boundary Review Response from and on behalf of Middleham Town Council

The RDC proposals put forward in September 2017 envisaged two single councillor Leyburn wards, each incorporating adjacent parishes and a single councillor ward for Middleham. The LGBCE proposals would see Middleham incorporated into a larger two councillor Leyburn ward. The main reasoning put forward for this latter proposal is that the division of Leyburn into two single councillor wards, incorporating some adjacent parishes, would be detrimental to Leyburn. Middleham is acknowledged in the review (para 51) to be a distinct and separate community with its own identity however, there is no assessment of the impact on Middleham of the proposed absorption into a double councillor Leyburn ward. Middleham Town Council has undertaken this assessment and has identified significant concerns about this in relation to the criteria for the review, namely:

1. Aim: Provide for Effective and Convenient Local Government and Improve electoral equality by equalising the number of electors each councillor represents

The economy of Middleham is distinctly different from Leyburn and is unique within Richmondshire: Middleham is the major centre of racehorse training in the North of England with 16 licenced training yards directly employing hundreds of staff plus many more through supporting industries. The industry being located here is also crucial to the viability of the Yorkshire and other northern race courses. The trainers all use the facility of Middleham Moor training gallops – which are common land owned by the town and community. This industry makes a multi-million pound annual input into the local, district and regional economy, which needs specialist and in-depth knowledge and understanding from its representatives especially at District level where many key decisions are made, including planning and housing, directly affecting the ability of the industry to do business, provide employment and to develop and to

encourage trainers to choose to be based in Middleham rather than anywhere else. Combining Middleham with Leyburn would dilute Middleham representation within the much larger electorate of the more conventionally market and tourism based town of Leyburn. As further housing developments increase the population of Leyburn, this would get worse reducing Middleham voters from 25% of voters in 2017 to 20% of voters in the ward by 2023. There is no guarantee that either councillor would be from Middleham and the smaller number of electors in Middleham would mean they were always a minority number whose interests are likely always to come second to those of Leyburn, where the majority of voters will always be.

2. Aim: Provide for Effective and Convenient Local Government.

The age and social demographic of Middleham is markedly different to Leyburn as a direct result of the racing industry here. Middleham is a uniquely young town with a population of under 1000 people that retains its own primary school and has very specific housing needs for young people aged 16+ coming into racing, for young families who want to live where they work and for retired racing staff who have worked in the town for much of their working lives and wish to remain a part of this community. Currently many racing staff have no option but to live as far afield as Colburn, Catterick and Richmond and travel in to start work at 6.00 a.m. – often using routes in winter conditions before the gritters have been out. Lack of affordable housing forces those leaving racing to retire elsewhere and away from family and friends. The Town Council, Middleham Trainers Association and Racing Welfare charity and housing association are currently working together with the support of Richmondshire Council to review current housing needs and the potential for joint developments of affordable housing including community housing.

3. Aim: Reflect Community Identity

The review report acknowledges the distinct and separate identity of the town and community of Middleham. But their proposal would subsume Middleham within the double councillor Leyburn ward. Residents of Middleham are very conscious of their local racing industry based economy and proud of being part of a small historic town with its own identity: it is the centre of racehorse training in the north of England with many residents employed in the industry, with businesses dependent on racing and a retirement community that includes former racing staff. Middleham is also the childhood home of King Richard III within Middleham Castle, sited in the middle of the town, whose uniqueness and historic and cultural value is widely acknowledged. This very accessible history attracts visitors, especially to the annual Richard III Festival that is organised by the community working with national and international societies to sustain the education and future maintenance of these nationally important links. Unlike many Dales villages, Middleham is a uniquely purposeful, industrious small town with a strong historic and current identity whose economic and cultural interests are very different to those of Leyburn.

Middleham Town Council has looked carefully at the proposals from the LGBCE and also at the original proposals from RDC. We understand the need to reduce the number of councillors and their associated costs and the criteria within which the reviewers have worked. We take at face value their assurance that they are open minded about alternative options and are encouraged that they have indeed taken good account of earlier proposals e.g. for the Upper Dales area. We have worked in good faith to achieve a better all-round solution, not just the best solution for Middleham without regard to the wider

area and neighbouring wards. We have made compromises to achieve a workable and equitable outcome. We have consulted locally on our proposals. We also agree with RDC and the LGBCE, both

of whom are on record stating that, whilst equalising the number of electors per councillor is a core principle, it is one that requires some flexibility when dealing with sparsely and super sparsely populated rural areas and other community identities and factors, that apply here. We have sought to work as closely as we can to the desired numbers and to ensure even balance between the neighbouring wards.

We propose the removal of the proposed creation of a Bolton Castle and Penhill ward and the redistribution of the parishes concerned into those wards with whom they have the strongest economic, cultural and geographical links. A table showing these revised wards is attached.

We have canvassed within the local area and our proposals have the support of numerous local businesses and organisations.

We have not received any objections to our proposals but there have been representations and suggestions, the most widely supported of which we have incorporated into our final proposal. A representative sample of responses from our local consultation is attached.

We are very willing to discuss these proposals further and to consider any other alternatives put forward to assist achieving the best outcome from the review.

Yours faithfully

Honor J Byford

Honor J Byford
Councillor
For Middleham Town Council

Ward and Parishes	Number of Councillors	Electorate 2023	Variations	Remarks
<u>Middleham</u> Middleham Coverham with Agglethorpe Melmerby West Scafton Caldbergh with East Scafton Carlton Town Carlton Highdale West Witton East Witton	1	1514	-5%	Comprises Middleham town and related parishes with strong economic and cultural links and geography - all are south of the River Ure. The value of the Middleham racing economy and proposed future developments (bringing 80 – 140 additional electors) can then be accommodated
<u>Leyburn</u> Leyburn Bellerby Wensley Preston-under-Scar Redmire Castle Bolton	2	3091	-3%	Comprises Leyburn town and parishes that are strongly linked to Leyburn and are all north of River Ure. Slightly below target number but future development beyond 2023 can then be accommodated.
<u>Lower Wensleydale</u> Harmby Spennithorne Thornton Steward Constable Burton Finghall Hutton Hang Akebar Newton-le-Willows Hunton Patrick Brompton East & West Hauxwell Barden	1	1689	+6%	Lower Wensleydale with geographic and cultural links in common, all north of the River Ure and connected via short links from the A684 main spinal through road.
<u>Bolton Castle</u>	0	0	0	We propose the removal of this rather artificial ward and incorporate its parishes into neighbouring wards with whom there are stronger links
<u>Yoredale</u> Bainbridge Aysgarth Burton-cum-Walden Carperby-cum-Thorseby	1	1717	+7.5%	Incorporates Bainbridge and its surrounding villages and Bishopdale. This is a widespread and sparsely populated area that will not divide down further either logically or workably, therefore a slightly larger electorate (still well within the 10% tolerance) is a reasonable solution.

Sample responses to our local consultation:

"I think it is essential for Middleham to remain separate with its own councillor and not through some arrogance or suggestion that we are, in some way, more important but simply due to our unique position of having an unusual rural industry which is a very large employer of young people. My business alone has 125 employees and I doubt if there is any employer of this size in the Dales.

I, at first, thought it was illogical to propose that West Witton should be in the Middleham ward and not East Witton but, having given it some thought, I think that it is most important to ensure that the High Moor, Spigot Lodge and all racing stables using Middleham Moor are in the same ward." **

Yours sincerely, Mark Johnston, Racehorse Trainer, MJR Racing

"I believe Middleham is its own town and is growing and growing so should remain independent and not join with Leyburn."

Many Thanks, Sharon

Owner/Proprietor, Richard III Hotel and Dante Arms Hotel

"Middleham is unique and has a different set of challenges and issues from a governance perspective. It would be better if Middleham continues to be properly represented at RDC level. I totally understand the need to increase the numbers to justify the Councillors but it seems odd to lose East Witton at the base of Coverdale yet take in West Witton and Burton cum Walden in Wensleydale and Bishopdale. " **

Andrea O'Keefe for Jedd O'Keefe Racing

"Thank you for alerting us to this issue and giving your concerns with a positive way forward.

Just one comment from a Church perspective. The Church has had East Witton connected with parishes to the East of it in the past and the feedback that we've received is that this has not worked, the people of East Witton look in the opposite direction and have more connection in the Middleham direction." **

Blessings

Revd. Jeff Payne

Co Rector of the Jervaulx Group of Churches (Middleham with Coverdale, East Witton & Thornton Steward)

"Your proposal seems to make sense to me, If Middleham went with Leyburn, I take it that would mean Middleham would have no direct say on any new housing developments etc?

From a Horse point of view that would be a huge negative for Middleham, increase in traffic etc."

regards

Karl Burke, Racehorse Trainer, Spigot Lodge

***NB We made changes from our draft proposal following our local consultation so that East Witton is now retained with Middleham and Burton cum Walden is included with Yoredale in our final proposal. This reflects local views and representations and fits with the closest service, business and cultural connections and local geography. Burton cum Walden is in Bishopdale, a further dale over from Coverdale and feeds more into Bainbridge than Middleham, whereas the closest shops and services for East Witton are at Middleham and it is a core part of the Parish centered on Middleham and the various religious, social and cultural activities and ties that the Parish actively provides to the wider community.*