

Comments received.

As a resident of Oker in the Parish of South Darley, Derbyshire, I am opposed to the Boundary Commission Review proposal to move Oker and Snitterton into the Matlock West Ward and divide the historic parish of South Darley. I have lived in Oker for over 42 years and I consider Oker to be a rural hamlet, completely separate and different from the nearby town of Matlock.

My children attended South Darley Primary School, and went to Sunday school at St. Mary's church in Cross Green. Over the years the family have attended many events in South Darley Village Hall and Wensley Reading Rooms. I was a South Darley Parish Councillor for around 20 years and I was on the South Darley Village Hall Management Committee for several years over 2 separate periods of time so I know the area and its character very well.

Oker and Snitterton are hamlets that should be kept in the Parish of South Darley and be represented by a District Councillor together with similar communities, such as South Darley, Wensley and Winstor that have the same issues. Oker and Snitterton do not have so much in common with Matlock and would not be well represented by a District Councillor concerned with the issues affecting a town ward.

I would like the Local Government Boundary Commission to restore Oker and Snitterton to be represented by a District Councillor who understands, and can do their best for, the type of community that we live in and the issues of a rural area.

The villages of Oker and Snitterton are rural villages with common interests with other local villages including Darley Bridge, Wensley etc and need to be represented by someone who is a resident in one of these communities and have different requirements than the residents of Matlock. And as such would not get sufficient priority in the hands of a Matlock representative who, understandably would see the residents of the town as a higher priority. It follows that the village voices would be less well heard over sensitive issues such as planning where Matlock representatives would see the expansion of their area of influence giving them more freedom to expand housing beyond the present Town limits.

The DDDC document terms of reference assumes that the people in the new housing development will identify as living in Matlock. Then in the next paragraph claims improved local democracy. Both of these statements cannot be true. Therefore there is no point in making these changes until the people affected can be consulted.

We are a forgotten parish and it would only get a lot worse if we were integrated into Matlock

I am very strongly opposed to the villages of Oker and Snitterton becoming part of Matlock Town Parish; the two villages have far more in common with the other villages forming the parish of South Darley – being rural, forming part of the Peak District National Park – or being very close to the National Park, and forming part of the views into the National Park and out of the National Park.

We saw the importance of Oker and Snitterton being part of South Darley Parish when the last local plan was being developed by DDDC – when the initial allocation of land included not only the former Cawdor Quarry but also all the green fields lying between the quarry and the village of Snitterton. We were able to mobilise the entire community, including our District Councillor and the parish council in mounting concerted opposition to this, and were successful in removing all the green fields from the Local Plan. Similarly when the formal planning submissions were made for the building of houses in Cawdor Quarry, it was not just the residents of Oker and Snitterton who opposed that part of the planning application which extended into the green fields, it was the entire Parish. I am confident that had Oker and Snitterton been part of Matlock Town Parish, there would have been no successful opposition to either the Local Plan or the Cawdor Quarry planning application.

The needs and requirements of the two villages have far more in common with the rest of South Darley parish – in terms of local public transport, in terms of road maintenance, and in terms of planning matters – than they do with the urban setting of Matlock.

I also note that most of the houses in Snitterton lie within the Peak District National Park (as do some of the homes in Oker), along with many of the other settlements forming South Darley – whereas the National Park boundaries were drawn at inception to avoid the major settlement of Matlock. It is important that the links between the National Park and Snitterton are preserved, and this is best done by remaining part of South Darley Parish.

I can however see that the residents of homes built as part of the Cawdor Quarry development will see themselves as being part of Matlock, even as the development moves further into the quarry, into the former Permanite site, and the very small number of houses that have been granted planning permission to be built on the field beyond Permanite, and I can see an argument that the boundary between South Darley Parish and Matlock Town parish should be re-drawn from the current boundary that is roughly half-way through the quarry such that all the Cawdor Quarry development will form part of Matlock Town parish. I would not oppose such a re-drawing of the boundaries of the Parishes concerned. However, this boundary should not extend to include within Matlock Town Council the water meadow (which we understand is to be transferred to the ownership of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust) that lies to the East of the development and abuts the River Derwent, nor should it include any of the fields between the end of the development and the village of Snitterton.

It is true that residents of Snitterton and Oker will have as their district councillors the councillors for the new Matlock West ward, and therefore that the South Darley Parish Council will have to deal with two sets of district councillors, this is a manageable problem – and when the warding arrangements for the District Council are next reviewed, it will still be possible for Oker and Snitterton to be re-warded and grouped once move with the rest of South Darley Parish. Whereas if the two villages are also made part of Matlock Town Council, then I fear that the inclusion of Oker and Snitterton with Matlock will be irreversible.

I see no compelling case for change to the warding arrangements for South Darley Parish; they appear to have worked effectively since we moved to Snitterton fifteen years ago.

Having attended meetings of the Parish Council as a member of the public, the current number of Councillors seems to be large enough to provide for good debate. If we increased the number of councillors, it is hard to see the benefit – and there would perhaps be more councillors than the work load warrants; but if we reduced the number of councillors we would likely reduce representation of different groups amongst the residents,

The new developments are part of Matlock in their links etc. Oker and Snitterton historically have links with the country parish of South Darley

It seems to work OK

It works why change?

If it is reduced there is a danger that with absences a quorum may be difficult to achieve.

Local democracy works in South Darley. Why alter it drastically when it isn't broke. The hamlets of Snitterton and Oker are not part of Matlock. The new housing in the quarry can by all means be incorporated into a greater Matlock

We all live in South Darley, with our own school, church pub/pubs, allotments and village hall. The current arrangements works with good relations between the locals and incomers. All of this will be upended if the folk of Snitterton and Oker are dragged into Matlock where their rural outlook will be swamped. We all know who is who.

Yes [to no change in size] unless we cannot fill the roles, then a proportional reduction could then be considered. Until then it should be left alone.

South Darley is a historic Parish, which has always included Oker and Snitterton as part of a rural parish. They have never been part of Matlock before and should not be moved into Matlock West electoral ward. It makes sense for the new houses in Matlock Spa to be part of Matlock Town Council as they are in an urban development.

The wards of South Darley Parish reflect the different communities that make up the parish. The wards are part of the Parish that come together for local government purposes as they are similar rural communities. The residents come together for local events and use the community facilities of the school, church and public halls at Cross Green and Wensley.

I was on the Parish Council for about 20 years and the number and distribution of the Councillors in different wards ensured that the views of all the local residents in the communities of Darley Bridge, Cross Green, Wensley, Oker and Snitterton were represented by a person who knew the local area and issues well.

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All the amenities for Oker & Snitterton are in South Darley, Why change a parish boundary that has existed very successfully for many years. Changing the Wards was a mistake. Why compound the mistake. The developments in the quarries are adjacent to Oker & Snitterton and will have a major impact on the two hamlets. Moving them to Matlock remove any protection from further development.

Why change something that works

The residents of Oker and Snitterton form an integral part of South Darley and identify with this rural group of several small villages. The communities are linked by many local organisations, such as the parish church, the village school, village hall and numerous societies and groups. The residents do not regard themselves as being part of Matlock town and have no wish to become a small rural anomaly attached to a town. The needs and aspirations of the town are very different. This is apparent from the recent poll of residents' opinion of the Boundary Commission's last minute change to include Oker and Snitterton within the new Matlock West DDDC ward: of the 121 respondents, 118 strongly objected to the proposal. The inconvenience of South Darley being split between two District Council wards will be far less than the effects of subsuming Oker and Snitterton into Matlock Town. To include half of the Cawdor Quarry development within South Darley (following the existing parish boundary) would also be incorrect. To do so would make South Darley into a strange parish of two thirds rural villages and one third housing estate - with differing needs. The new houses will be an integral part of the new development and will have no direct vehicular access into South Darley - in accordance with the Local Plan. The residents of these houses will, no doubt, regard themselves as being part of the town, not the surrounding villages. The correct solution will be to redraw the boundary between South Darley Parish and Matlock Town to skirt around the Cawdor development so that, when built, the new houses will lie within Matlock Town. No existing properties would be affected.

Because South Darley consists of a group of small villages, it seems sensible to divide the parish into wards which approximate to these. I find it useful to have councillors who are particularly associated with our ward.

Eight councillors seems to be about the correct number for a parish of this size. There are sufficient councillors to provide a variety of skills, interests and enthusiasms.

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The correct solution will be to redraw the boundary between South Darley Parish and Matlock Town to skirt around the Cawdor development so that, when built, the new houses will lie within Matlock Town. No existing properties would be affected. A suggested revision of the boundary is attached.

With Oker and Snitterton transferred into Matlock West DDDC ward, it will be necessary for South Darley Parish to remain warded. Because South Darley consists of a group of small villages, it is logical to divide the parish into wards which approximate to these. The various councillors can, to a degree, concentrate on particular needs of their wards: they are likely to live within their wards and be well known to the residents. It also gives the residents the confidence that their part of the parish is not being neglected.

From my experience as a parish councillor, I consider eight councillors to be about the correct number for a parish of this size. There are sufficient councillors to provide a variety of skills, interests and enthusiasms to enable the council to function effectively and efficiently. With fewer councillors there would be the danger of too much falling onto one or two individuals. With many more, the discussions would be in danger of becoming too protracted and there would be the need to form numerous committees and sub-committees.

The Boundary Commission was quite wrong to include Oker and Snitterton in Matlock West, especially at such a late stage without the opportunity for anyone to comment. The final recommendations have not yet been passed by Parliament and all efforts should be made to stop them from being passed without amendment.

As residents of Oker we do not want to move out of South Darley Parish Council. We would prefer that the Parish boundaries are re-drawn so that Oker and Snitterton remain within South Darley parish, and the new housing developments in the former quarries are located in Matlock Town parish.

This is because Oker is a rural development with strong links to the church, school, village hall and pub in South Darley – all of which are within walking distance. We do not have the same links to Matlock which is an urban community and not within easy walking distance.

We do not wish to become part of Matlock Town Council, as we do not have any links to Matlock.

We are very happy with the present arrangement of three wards in South Darley Parish Council. This is because all areas are slightly different in make-up e.g. more houses and parking problems in Wensley, congestion with lorries over Darley Bridge in South Darley, and rural issues in Oker and Snitterton.

We believe that the current number of 8 parish councillors for South Darley is appropriate. This number allows for a Parish Councillor from each ward to be absent from the Parish Council meeting and still have that ward represented.

We are very happy with the actions of the Parish Council.
