

RECEIVED

13 MAY 2008

[REDACTED]
Brampford Speke
Exeter
Devon [REDACTED]
Tel. (013 [REDACTED]

8/5/08

The Review Manager (Devon Review)
The Boundary Committee For England
Trevelyan House
Gt Peter St
London SW1P 2HW

Re: Brampford Speke: Preserving the interests of a small rural parish.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Having recently attended a meeting convened by Devon County Council at which it took soundings from town and parish councils regarding the future of local government in Devon, I have been asked by my Parish Council to write to you. I am a Parish Councillor in Brampford Speke, which is a very small rural parish six miles north of Exeter.

We have been observing recent events and noted the failure of Exeter City Council's Unitary Bid last year, which we understand was mainly due to the fact that it did not satisfy the financial viability test. We understand that this failure was mainly due to Exeter City Council not being large enough in its present form to enable value for money to be obtained in the setting up of structures through which it would have delivered unitary services. Further to this, we are aware that Exeter City Council has now submitted proposals to you in which it seeks, predictably, to extend its boundaries, and concern regarding this is at the centre of our wish to communicate with you.

Here in Brampford Speke, we are at present within East Devon District Council's area, and we are located at the extreme west end of the East Devon District. Our village is geographically separated from Exeter by the River Exe, is relatively unspoilt by unsympathetic development, and is surrounded by farmland. Thus we see our village as very much a rural entity, despite our proximity to Exeter. The central part of Brampford Speke is a Conservation Area, there are several listed buildings within the parish, and many footpaths which are very popular with walkers from all over the county due to the natural beauty of the environment.

We understand entirely that improved efficiency and money saving can result from changing the present structure of local government in Devon, to one in which unitary

councils deliver services, and we have no objection in principal to these aims, or to the concept of unitary councils. However, there is a strong feeling locally that we want to be part of a unitary council which is predominantly *rural* in nature, and we therefore specifically and strongly oppose being “swallowed up” by an expanded Exeter, in which we would become a “suburb” of a predominantly *urban* unitary council.

We feel that an urban unitary council would have neither the capacity, nor the experience, to support and reflect the concerns of a rural community, and we can see that the voice of our rural community would be liable to play second fiddle to the urban majority.

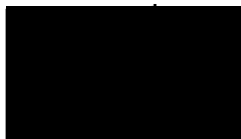
There are many issues facing small villages, such as transport, the need to avoid being overtaken by urban sprawl, the need to support and preserve our village school, rural and agricultural planning issues, agriculture generally and its relation to conservation issues specifically, and in our case, the site of special scientific interest adjacent to the River Exe within Brampford Speke Parish. All of these issues require the capacity and experience of a council with a predominantly rural catchment area, and would be highly unlikely to be handled optimally by an urban-centred council.

From looking at the website which Exeter City Council have set up in order to publicise their unitary proposals, it is not possible to be sure whether they intend to include us in their boundary, as they have deliberately not “put lines on the map” – presumably to avoid the sort of objection which this letter is raising. However there is some cause for optimism for us in the sense that firstly, they do acknowledge that “urban and rural needs are very different”, and secondly they seem to be referring to expansion eastwards rather than northward. Also, they actually say there is very little socioeconomic interaction between Exeter and our area, and that “by far the strongest interaction is with wards to the southwest and east of Exeter”, all of which we would agree with.

I understand that you are in the second phase of the process of consultation in your review, and that you intend to publish draft proposals in early July. I also have been told by Lesley Smith of Devon Association Of Parish Councils, that her organisation fully supports the argument which we are putting forward. Therefore I am hoping that you will take into account the views expressed in this letter in producing these draft proposals, and am sure that you will be hearing from other small parishes locally, who feel the same as we do, and who want to be part of the right kind of unitary council.

I am grateful for your attention, and wish you well in undertaking what will be the most important local government review in Devon for decades.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Dr John Eggleton.

Dr John Eggleton. (For and on behalf of Brampford Speke Parish Council).