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Submission to Proposals for local government reorganisation in Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland

I am making this submission to the consultation on *Proposals for local government reorganisation in Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland* on behalf of the Association of British Counties (ABC), an unincorporated association which promotes the importance of the 92 historic counties of the UK to our nation's heritage and culture. We are delighted that the Government shares our view of the importance of the historic counties to our history, culture and sense of community^[1].

The main threat to the identities of the historic counties is their confusion with local government. Hence, although ABC has no views on the structures of local government, we firmly believe that local government terminology and council names should be chosen so as to draw a clear distinction between local government and the historic counties.

Given these concerns, our response addresses Item 4(d) of the consultation's *Criteria for unitary local government*:

"Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance."

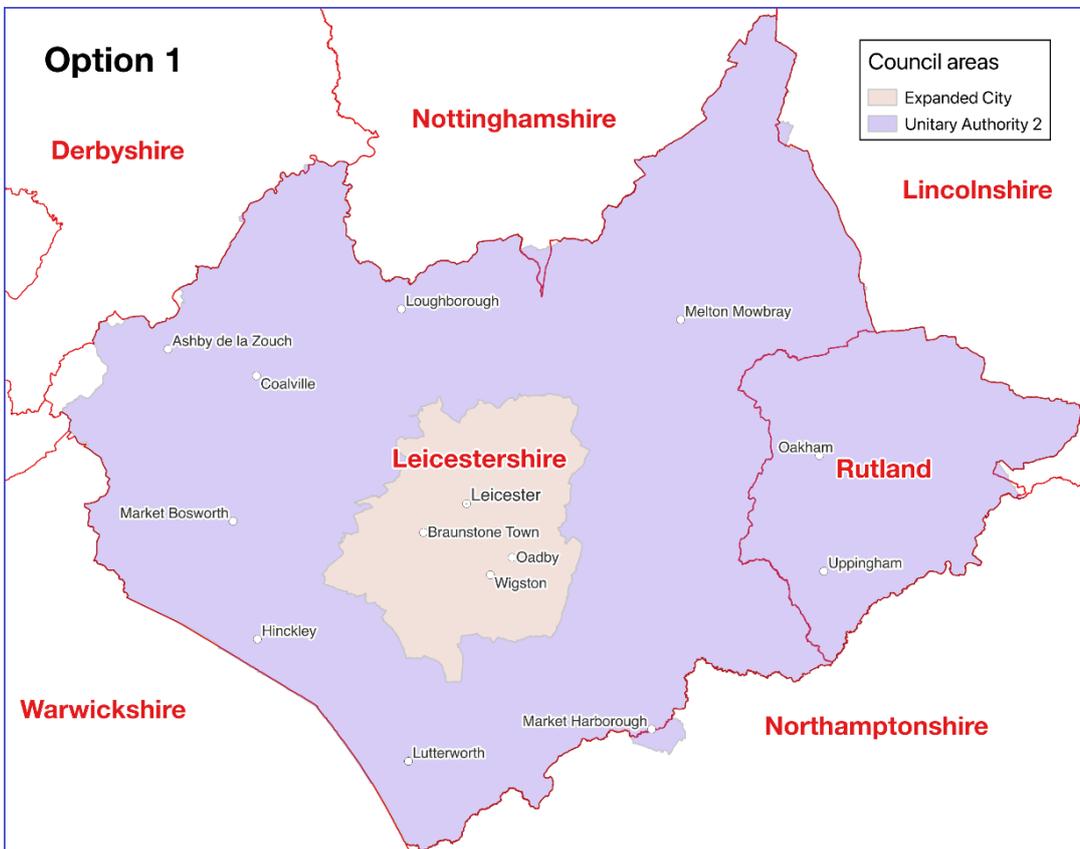
None of the 10 consultation questions refers specifically to Item 4(d). Hence, our response most accurately lies within the *"any other comment you have on this proposal"* of Question 8.

ABC considers that none of the three proposed unitary local government set-ups presented by the consultation document adequately considers issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance. The proposed names for the new councils imply that the name '*Rutland*' will not appear in any successor authority name, in direct conflict with the historic identity of the county.

The current local government and lieutenancy arrangements in this area are a rare example where present-day administrative areas still closely reflect the historic counties on which they were originally based. There was, however, a period from 1974-1996 when Rutland found itself under Leicestershire County Council and a '*Leicestershire*' lieutenancy. The anger this stirred up led to the creation of a separate Rutland unitary authority and lieutenancy in 1997.

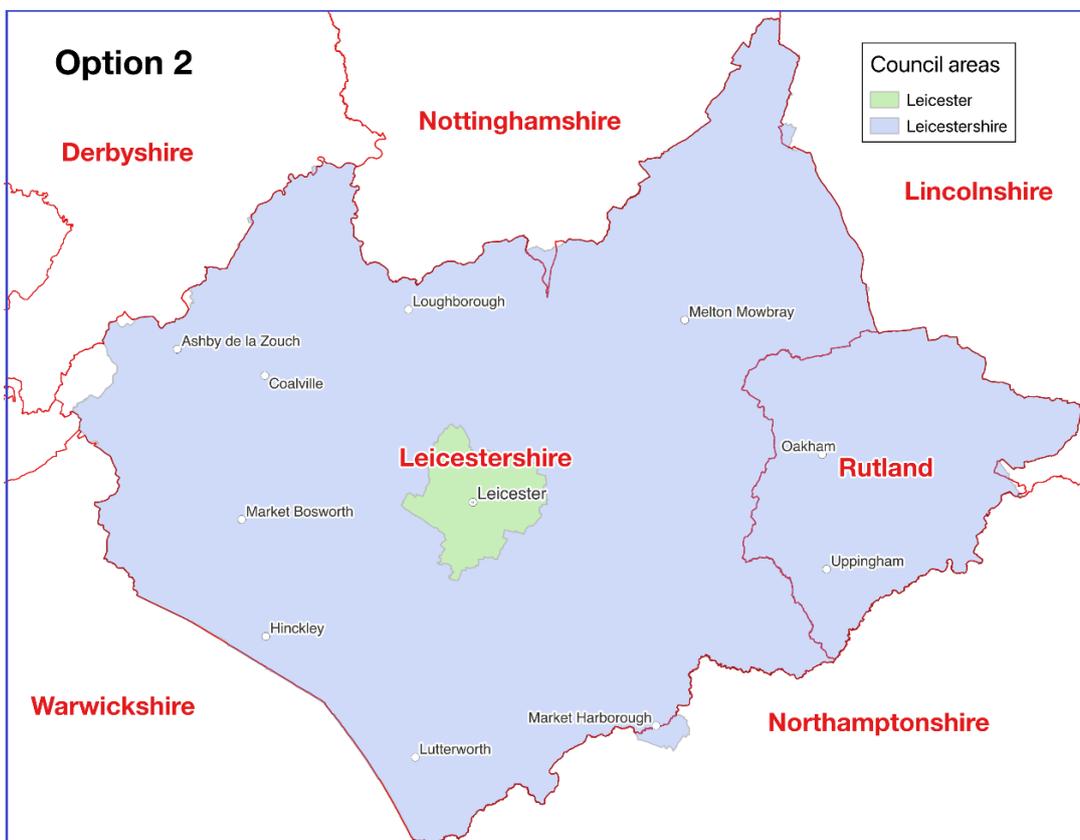
In the separate submissions from Leicestershire County Council and from the district councils and Rutland Council it was made explicitly clear that the new councils should be named so as to maintain the identities of both Leicestershire and Rutland and, also, that separate *Leicestershire* and *Rutland* lieutenancies should be maintained. Neither of these intentions are reflected in the consultation document. This document seems to be deliberately vague about the names the new authorities are to have. It avoids mentioning the lieutenancies issue altogether.

We make suggestions below in relation to appropriate council names for all three of the options presented in the consultation.



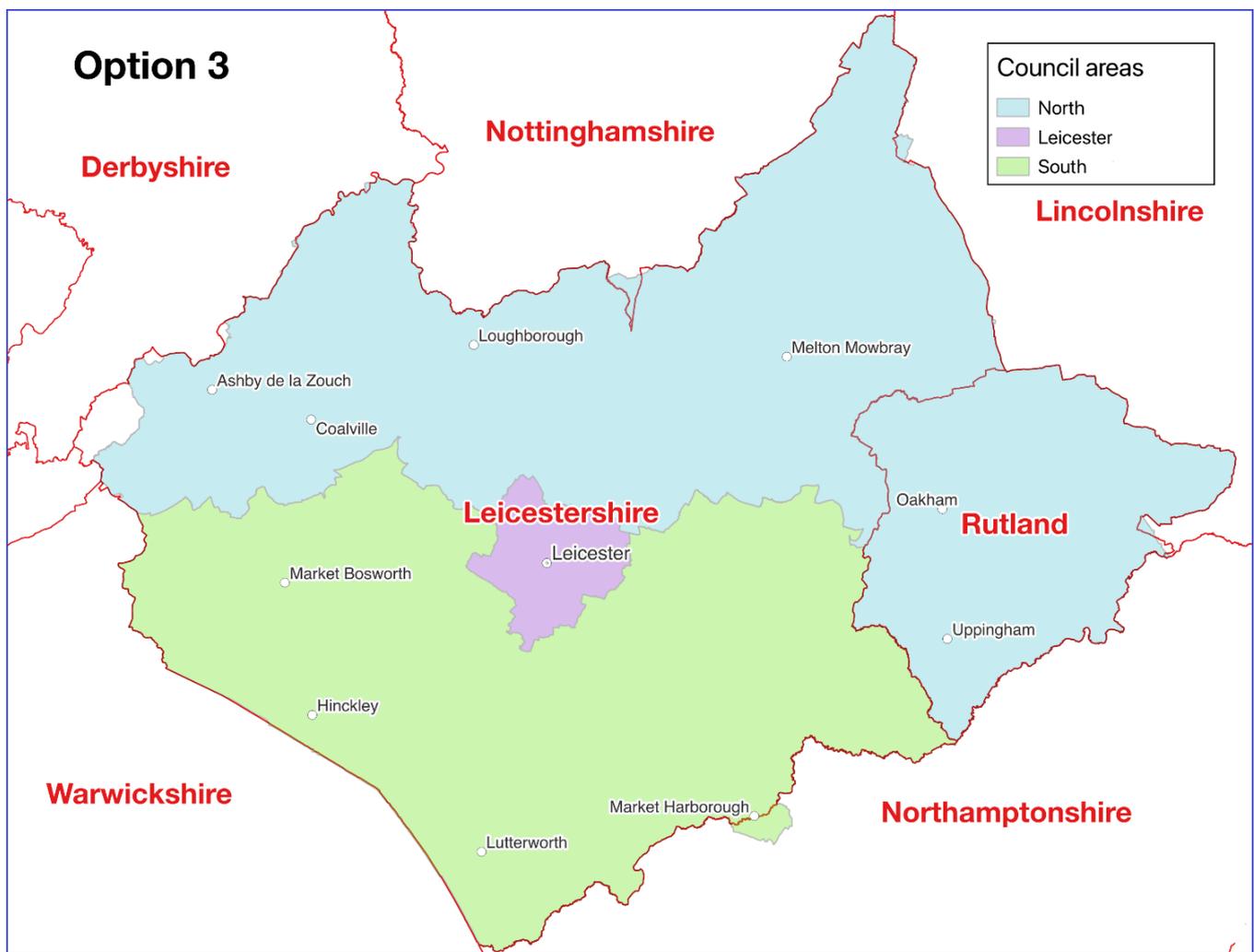
The council areas proposed in Option 1 compared to the historic counties

Option 1 bizarrely just names the proposed councils as “*Expanded City*” and “*Unitary Authority 2*”. ABC recommends that “*Unitary Authority 2*” be named “*Leicestershire and Rutland Council*”.



The council areas proposed in Option 2 compared to the historic counties

In Option 2 the proposed council covering the current Leicestershire County Council and Rutland Council areas is named as “*Leicestershire Council*”. This proposal originated with Leicestershire County Council which described it as a “*new council for Leicestershire and Rutland*”. Where has the “*and Rutland*” gone? Any such council should be called “*Leicestershire and Rutland Council*”.



The council areas proposed in Option 3 compared to the historic counties

Option 3 implies that the proposed new council comprising the current district council areas of Charnwood, North West Leicestershire, Melton and the current unitary authority area of Rutland be named “*North Leicestershire Council*”. This scenario, as originally proposed by the district councils and Rutland council, was to be called “*North Leicestershire and Rutland Council*”. The “*and Rutland*” part from the name has apparently been dropped. Any such council should clearly be called “*North Leicestershire and Rutland Council*”.

A prominent ‘*Save Rutland*’ campaign has been run within the county, aimed at maintaining separate Leicestershire and Rutland lieutenancies whatever happens to the council arrangements. This was also explicitly part of the submission from the district councils / Rutland council. And yet the consultation makes no reference at all to this issue. ABC’s proposes that the lieutenancies be re-appointed to the historic counties throughout the UK (see below).

As part of this reorganisation, the Government should replace the terms ‘*county*’ and ‘*county council*’ within local government terminology and parlance with ‘*council area*’ and ‘*council*’, as used in Scotland. Council names should take the form “*North Leicestershire and Rutland Council*”. This would ensure that local government has an identity distinct from the historic counties.

Clearing the confusion with local government could be backed up by two further measures to strengthen official recognition for the importance of the historic counties:

- Including a definition of ‘*historic county*’ within the Interpretation Act 1978 would ensure the consistent use of the historic counties across Government, its agencies and within the heritage sector. The definition used by the Office for National Statistics is ideal^[2,3].
- Appointing the lieutenancies of England^[4] to the historic counties, as are many lieutenancies in Scotland^[5] would be a suitable official recognition of the importance of both the historic counties and the office of lord lieutenant.

Our *Historic Counties of the United Kingdom Bill*^[6] details the small legislative changes which would be necessary to implement these measures.

Many thanks for giving us the opportunity to express our views on the ongoing local government reorganisation. We trust that you will give these views your due consideration.

Yours sincerely

Peter Boyce

Peter Boyce
Chairman, Association of British Counties

NOTES

[1] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019, *Celebrating the historic counties of England*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/celebrating-the-historic-counties-of-england/celebrating-the-historic-counties-of-england>

[2] Office for National Statistics, 2024, *Index of Place Names in Great Britain*

<https://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/datasets/208d9884575647c29f0dd5a1184e711a/about>

[3] Historic Counties Trust, 2022, *Historic Counties Standard*,

https://www.historiccountiestrust.co.uk/Historic_Counties_Standard.pdf

[4] Association of British Counties, 2022, The lieutenancies of England and their relation to the historic counties

https://gazetteer.org.uk/ABC_Fact_Sheet_Lieutenancy_Areas_England.pdf

[5] Association of British Counties, 2022, The lieutenancies of Scotland and their relation to the historic counties

https://gazetteer.org.uk/ABC_Fact_Sheet_Lieutenancy_Areas_Scotland.pdf

[6] Association of British Counties, 2025, *Historic Counties of the United Kingdom Bill*

https://gazetteer.org.uk/ABC_Historic_Counties_of_the_UK_Bill.pdf