

# **Coventry City Council’s Response to the Draft Recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This document is in response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England’s (LGBCE) initial recommendations for the local government boundaries for Coventry City Council, *New electoral arrangements for Coventry City Council Draft Recommendations* published in October 2023.
- 1.2. We thank the LGBCE and the inspectors for the work they have done and their dedication to engaging constructively with the points raised by all parties.
- 1.3. We broadly welcome the draft recommendations which are very much in the spirit of the proposals submitted by Coventry City Council.
- 1.4. It was our belief that the broad pattern of the wards as they exist is correct. The wards as they currently exist are well established, with each ward combining two to three distinct neighbourhoods which have been united in wards since the establishment of the council as a Metropolitan District in 1974.
- 1.5. The basis of the proposal is the criteria set out by the LGBCE and:
  - I. Where possible have taken into account historic links i.e. areas have previously been in different wards; and
  - II. Where possible parliamentary boundaries have been respected; and
  - III. In drawing boundaries, consideration was given to natural boundaries- major roads, railway lines, industrial estates etc.
- 1.6. It is therefore welcomed that the inspectors have agreed Coventry should be represented by 54 councillors, the same number as there are now and that Coventry should have 18 wards. We are also pleased that in the vast majority of cases the LGBCE have come to similar conclusions to those contained in our initial proposals.
- 1.7. On a number of proposals which differ from those put forward by Coventry City Council, we offer further points as to why our initial proposals may ensure wards effectively fulfil the criteria set by the LGBCE.

## **2. North and North East Coventry**

### **Foleshill, Henley and Longford**

- 2.1. The fact that there is a broad consensus about the boundaries of Foleshill and Longford reflects the overwhelming consensus that the existing boundaries are correct and make for wards that are coherent and meet the criteria set by the LGBCE.

- 2.2. We are pleased that the inspectors have come to the same conclusion as we have with regards to altering Henley Ward as set out in para 39. We maintain that this move ensures electoral equality whilst recognising the historic link between Manor Farm and Wyken.
- 2.3. We do not recognise the proposed Sowe ward as described in the proposal set out in para 40 as a viable solution in this part of the city, particularly with Hinckley Rd being the only way in or out of the estate, therefore not meeting the requirement to support effective and convenient local government. Furthermore, the proposal does not reflect established community ties or how local people view their neighbourhoods. We agree with para 44 of the draft recommendations about the links between Walsgrave, Potter's Green and Woodway Park.

### **Holbrooks and Radford**

- 2.4. We agree with the main recommendation for Holbrooks Ward. The inclusion of the 's' in Holbrooks, and the small amendment to the existing Radford ward to move the existing boundary from Sadler Road to Keresley Road and Wallace Road as outlined in para 47.
- 2.5. We would like to provide an alternative perspective on the proposal outlined in para 52 with the use of Burnaby Rd as the boundary between Holbrooks and Radford.
- 2.6. There are significant historical links identifying Yelverton Road as being in Holbrooks Ward, predominantly associated with the numerous metalworking factories and heavy industry. The Brico engineering company is based on Yelverton Road and also had several factories in the ward, employing countless local residents.
- 2.7. The railway line branched into Holbrooks at the top of Yelverton Road, providing a natural boundary, and factories such as the original Jaguar factory in Holbrooks and motor panels linked up with the Brico, sending munitions and aerospace parts throughout the country during both world wars, and afterwards.
- 2.8. Yelverton Road itself opens straight onto Holbrook Lane, the main arterial road running through the centre of the ward, and the top of the road onto Burnaby Road also in Holbrook's ward. Both ends of the road open into Holbrook's Ward.
- 2.9. Another point to note is the catchment area for children in this area would be a Holbrooks school.
- 2.10. We agree with the LGBCE to reject the proposal to include the area between Halford Lane and Bennetts Road South, currently located in Holbrook ward into Bablake ward. It is unnecessary and does not meet the aims of the criteria as set out by the LGBCE.

### **3. North West Coventry**

#### **Bablake and Woodlands**

- 3.1. We recognise the significant challenge posed by the population growth which will follow the completion of the Eastern Green SUE as identified in para 55. We believe that such a steep increase fundamentally changes the North West of the city.
- 3.2. We reaffirm that the A45 forms a strong natural boundary between Bablake and Woodlands and that the Eastern Green SUE will mirror the existing community of Woodlands Ward which broadly consists of Eastern Green. Furthermore even with the issue of the SUE addressed we recognise that it is important to address the electoral equality issues by redistributing parts of Bablake to Sherbourne ward which in turn recognises the community ties in Coundon that underpin much of Sherbourne Ward.
- 3.3. We would stress that geographically the new Eastern Green SUE will be next to Eastern Green in Woodlands ward and with a major road separating it from Bablake. We agree with para 60 and 61 that the A45 is the most appropriate boundary.
- 3.4. A further point to note is that north of the A45 is allocated as greenbelt within the current local plan and the new draft local plan for Coventry does not propose any reallocation of greenbelt land, therefore the A45 will not form a spine road as put forward within the alternative proposals.
- 3.5. We recognise these proposals will require a warded parish council and reaffirm this will better reflect the changing nature of the area with the growth of the Eastern Green SUE and the community that will grow in this area.

#### **Sherbourne**

- 3.6. We agree with the recommendation put forward for Sherbourne Ward. The proposed Sherbourne Ward includes more of what is known as Coundon than the current Ward boundaries and other proposals put forward in this consultation.
- 3.7. We agree with the point in para 67 that the alternative proposals put forward will split communities within Sherbourne Ward. The use of Holyhead Rd as the boundary between Sherbourne and Whoberley Wards splits Coundon down the middle in a change that does not reflect community identity. The division of Lower Coundon and Spon End from the rest of Coundon would further divide Coundon unnecessarily and does not fit the criteria set out by the LGBCE.
- 3.8. We are pleased the LGBCE have included the Scots Lane area in the proposals for Sherbourne Ward as set out in para 69. We agree with the recommendation to use Norman Place Rd as the boundary to the top end of Sherbourne Ward, providing a strong and identifiable boundary between Sherbourne and Bablake Wards and propose that it should remain the boundary in this area.
- 3.9. We do not agree with the amendment put forward as part of the recommendation in para 71 to move 26–140 Allesley Old Road, Sunnyside Close and Rushmoor Drive, and streets off Rushmoor Drive, which are currently included in Sherbourne ward. The estate itself is

accessed by Allesley Old Rd, however the estates connection to the River Sherbourne is strong and people living in this area identify more with Sherbourne Ward to Whoberley ward.

#### **4. South East and Central Coventry**

##### **Binley and Willenhall**

- 4.1. The fact that there is a broad consensus about the boundaries of Binley and Willenhall reflects the overwhelming consensus that the existing boundaries are correct and make for a ward that are coherent and meet the criteria set by the LGBCE as discussed in para 73.

##### **Cheylesmore and St Michael's**

- 4.2. We recognise that each city wide proposal varied greatly as the LGBCE identified in para 78 and again in para 88 and hope to bring clarity to the final recommendations with the comments below.
- 4.3. St Michael's Ward is made up of three distinct areas – Hillfields, City Centre and Charterhouse. The ring road roughly represents the footprint of the medieval city walls of Coventry, and Hillfields was the first suburb of the city. These connections can be seen in the housing stock, the connections that still exist within communities and how they interact. For example, Sidney Stringer Academy sits just outside the ring road, serving both Hillfields and the city centre, likewise with doctors' surgeries and other support services.
- 4.4. These historic connections can also be seen in how residents move around St Michael's Ward between these neighbourhoods. The easiest and most used walkways are under the ring road by the Swanswell leading into Hillfields and from Gosford St leading into Far Gosford St to Charterhouse area of the ward. This connection does not exist to the same degree in other parts of the city centre, particularly in how people navigate the ring road.
- 4.5. The proposals put forward in the council submission reflected how areas have changed due to development. We recognise the concern of the LGBCE by moving the former railway line boundary between St Michael's and Lower Stoke, however this boundary has changed a great deal since the last review. The railway line boundary between St Michael's and Lower Stoke made sense before it was decommissioned and even after it closed. It is now used as a cycleway linking neighbourhoods in the area. This is distinguished from Jimmy Hill Way which runs between Upper Stoke and St Michael's and remains a strong and identifiable boundary.
- 4.6. Alder Moor Lane is what residents recognise as the boundary between the Stoke Alder Moor and the newer development on the Humber factory site. Residents on the new estate would consider the estate to be separate from Stoke Alder Moor.
- 4.7. We would submit that this is an option to consider in reaching electoral equality in Earlsdon and would suggest this better meets the criteria recognising community identity.
- 4.8. We agree with the proposal in para 86 to include Parkside in Cheylesmore and that this is sole change for Cheylesmore.

## **Lower Stoke, Upper Stoke and Wyken**

- 4.9. We recognise the need for electoral equality in Lower Stoke and the challenge in providing electoral equality whilst recognising community identity.
- 4.10. The proposal adopted by the LGBCE in para 93 reaches electoral equality however it splits the Poets Corner area in Lower Stoke and removes the identifiable boundary of Ansty Rd between Upper and Lower Stoke. We agree that the inclusion of the Kingsway and Marlborough Road area in Lower Stoke Ward makes sense and provides clearer boundaries between Upper and Lower Stoke.
- 4.11. If the recommendation remains to use Longfellow Rd as the boundary between Upper and Lower Stoke as set out in para 93, we ask that the commission reconsider the boundary along Hipswell Highway. Hipswell Highway is undoubtedly Wyken in the minds of residents, yet it is split between three wards in the proposal. We propose if this boundary change is adopted, that Hipswell Highway is put entirely in Wyken Ward.
- 4.12. We agree with the LGBCE on para 94 to not include Walsgrave in a Wyken Ward and that Wyken is a well established and recognised neighbourhood in the minds of residents across the city.

## **5. South West Coventry**

### **Earlsdon and Whoberley**

- 5.1. We are pleased the LGBCE adopted the council's proposal to find a solution for electoral inequality between Earlsdon and Whoberley Wards and agree with the proposal to move Broad Lane and Tile Hill Lane area of Earlsdon Ward into Whoberley as set out in para 100.
- 5.2. We agree with the LGBCE on the use of the A45 as a major boundary between Bablake and Woodlands Wards, however a point to note is people living in the Mantilla Drive area identify more with Wainbody Ward and Finham with facilities on the other of the A45 such as Finham Park school and the doctors surgery.
- 5.3. It is notable that the speed of the A45 between the two wards is 40mph and not 60mph as it is between Bablake and Woodlands, and there are crossings, particularly for people crossing to reach the school. We submit that the LGBCE may want to reconsider this area a part of Wainbody Ward if it is possible to include the Earlsdon part of St Michael's in an Earlsdon Ward.

### **Tile Hill and Canley and Wainbody**

- 5.4. We are pleased to see that inspectors have agreed with our solution to the challenge of electoral equality between Wainbody and the former Westwood Ward, which the LGBCE agreed should be renamed Tile Hill and Canley.
- 5.5. As discussed previously, the large expansion in population in the North West of the city requires addressing the boundaries between Woodlands and Westwood, this allows for Woodlands to accommodate the Eastern Green SUE and address the severe electoral inequality in the south of the city.

- 5.6. On reflection we agree with the changes proposed by the LGBCE as set out in para 107, transferring all of box QG to Wainbody Ward. This provides a clear boundary and effective local government, maintaining all of Westwood Heath in one ward. It also recognises that Tile Hill Village, is linked with the rest of Tile Hill.
- 5.7. The current Westwood ward is dominated by the neighbourhoods of Canley and Tile Hill. The solution in the draft recommendation seek to gather the majority of Tile Hill in one ward where as previously it was split between two.
- 5.8. The draft recommendation recognises that the neighbourhoods of Tile Hill and Canley have far more in common and links, in terms of community facilities and amenities than they do with Westwood Heath, which is also geographically separated from Canley by a business park.
- 5.9. Westwood Heath (Box QG) is similar in terms of demographic profile and in terms of community need to its neighbouring boxes in Wainbody ward. We therefore maintain that Westwood Heath would be better served as part of Wainbody Ward.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1. In conclusion, we thank the inspectors for the work. We believe that the draft recommendations are a sensible and fair solution to the challenge of a growing population. In particular we believe that the warding patterns are the correct ones. We appreciate that the draft recommendations came to a similar conclusion.
- 6.2. The further amendments suggested in this report seek to refine points around community identity for the commission's final proposals.
- 6.3. In summary, the options for the LGBCE to consider are as follows:
  - i. The boundary between Radford Ward and Holbrooks Ward with Yelverton Rd remaining in a Holbrooks Ward.
  - ii. The inclusion of 26–140 Allesley Old Road, Sunnyside Close and Rushmoor Drive, and streets off Rushmoor Drive in Sherbourne Ward instead of Whoberley Ward.
  - iii. The historic and current links within the central area and the options contained in para 4.2-4.8 of this report and within the Council's initial consultation submission.
  - iv. The division of Poets Corner in Lower Stoke Ward and Ansty Rd as an identifiable boundary between Upper and Lower Stoke.
  - v. The whole of Hipswell Highway included in a Wyken Ward.
  - vi. Consider box PA as part of a Wainbody Ward instead of including in a future Earlsdon Ward.