

South Gloucestershire electoral review 2017

Labour Group response to the Draft Recommendations November 2017

Labour Group is on the whole pleased with the Draft Recommendations and in most cases urges the Commission to confirm them. We do ask for a re-think in some areas, particularly in Patchway, Parkwall, Frenchay and Downend but overall we conclude that the LGBCE has achieved a pattern of wards that reflects the interests and identities of local communities and delivers effective and convenient local government.

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Draft Recommendations by area

South western areas

Bradley Stoke North, Bradley Stoke South and Little Stoke

We urge the LGBCE to confirm the Draft Recommendations for these wards, based largely on the submission we put forward at the warding stage. We endorse the Commission's proposal to extend the Little Stoke ward southwards to improve its electoral equality.

We continue to argue that **Little Stoke** is a distinct community that would be best served as a ward in its own right rather than swamped by the more modern neighbouring area, and endorse the Commission's recommendation here.

We believe that the **Bradley Stoke North** and **Bradley Stoke South** wards in the Draft Recommendations reflect the interests and identity of that community and deliver effective and convenient local government. Parts of Bradley Stoke parish already sit in Stoke Gifford district ward, and we ask the Commission to disregard any complaint about this continuing with the new wards, which we believe are tidier than the existing ones and thus an improvement.

Charlton & Cribbs, Filton and Patchway Coniston

There appears to be unanimity that **Filton** ward should remain coterminous with the Town Council area; there is strong local desire to retain this integrity. Alternative options for Filton are severely limited by it having a district border on two sides and large industrial areas on its other borders, so we strongly support the LGBCE's Draft Recommendation for this ward.

We are, however, unhappy with the proposal adopted for Patchway and this is one area where we urge the Commission to reconsider. Our original warding proposal was for a three-seat Patchway ward coterminous with the parish. Town councillors we have consulted are aggrieved that the Commission has not applied the principle of parish coterminosity in Patchway when it has adopted this approach for other parishes (such as Bitton, Thornbury and Emersons Green). They further feel that the proposed Patchway Coniston ward omits too much of the Coniston community which is effectively bisected by the proposal: they reject the argument that the western end of Coniston Road is in any way a separate community from the other end of the road. Patchway is one of the council's Priority Neighbourhoods which are based on indices of deprivation, and we and local town councillors are concerned that the draft recommendation would dilute the council's focus on anti-deprivation work in the area.

As a compromise, Town councillors have asked us to pursue a 2x two-seat alternative for the existing Patchway district ward area that would maintain more of the Patchway parish within a Patchway-badged ward. To achieve this we urge the Commission to add the remainder of polling district PCB together with the area of PCA south of Highwood Road and east of Charlton Boulevard to the draft proposal for Patchway Coniston to create a two-seat **Patchway** ward.

The resulting two-seat **Charlton & Cribbs** ward would then be more closely focussed on those two communities, without historic Patchway areas. This would far better reflect the interests and identities of the distinct communities in this part of the district and deliver more effective and convenient local government.

Stoke Gifford and University

We accept the rationale for the Commission's Draft Recommendations to create **Stoke Gifford** and **University** wards and recognise the very distinct nature of the university area. We therefore urge the Commission to confirm these boundaries.

Rural west

Pilning & Severn Beach and Severn Vale

Although the Draft Recommendation for **Pilning & Severn Beach** and for **Severn Vale** are quite different from those we originally suggested, we acknowledge that they more closely resemble historic representation. As these proposals would not impact on other parts of the district we are content with them.

Thornbury

At warding stage we argued that "*this review gives the ideal opportunity to create a nicely-sized town-focussed ward*" for **Thornbury**. This is exactly what the LGBCE has chosen to do, so we obviously support the Draft Recommendation and urge the Commission to confirm it. By creating a more town-focussed ward and minimising the amount of rural hinterland included, we believe that the Commission is proposing a ward that better reflects the interests and identity of that town and delivers effective and convenient local government.

Rural east and Yate

Charfield, Frampton Cotterell, Chipping Sodbury, Dodington, Yate Central and Yate North

We note the Draft Recommendations for **Charfield, Frampton Cotterell Chipping Sodbury, Dodington, Yate Central** and **Yate North**.

Sodbury Vale

Sodbury Vale presents the problem that it is a sparsely-populated dispersed area which the increase in elector to councillor ratio will exacerbate. Our initial suggestion was to link it with Chipping Sodbury as this would have created a slightly more compact ward. We note that the LGBCE favours an alternative solution but we continue to be concerned that Sodbury Vale will be geographically unmanageable and therefore detrimental to good governance. As the ward is very similar to the existing Cotswold Edge, we are unclear why the name is being changed and urge the Commission to reconsider this.

Western areas

Emersons Green

The Commission's Draft Recommendation for **Emersons Green** is very similar to our original suggestion, so we support it and urge its confirmation. We continue to believe that polling district ROF, which is actually part of the Emersons Green Parish area, should join the rest of its parish in a district ward, and are pleased that this has been adopted in the draft.

Frenchay & Downend, Staple Hill & Mangotsfield and Winterbourne

Labour Group refrained from proposing a ward that straddled the river Frome, which we recognise is a strong and clear boundary. We are surprised that the Commission has concluded that the Ring Road forms a more significant barrier as this principle has not been applied in neighbouring Emersons Green. Frenchay and Downend are two distinct communities whose residents do not share good road links, facilities, schools or shops.

We therefore urge the Commission to unpick this Draft Recommendation and instead unite Frenchay (in practice polling districts FSD and WIA which in 2023 will contain exactly the number of electors for 1 councillor) with Winterbourne to create a 3-seat **Winterbourne & Frenchay** ward. This would leave a compact 2-seat **Downend** ward east of the river Frome, as it always has been.

We strongly support the proposed creation of **Staple Hill & Mangotsfield** ward, which is based on our original warding submission. All the arguments we put forward then, which evidently persuaded the LGBCE, still stand so we strongly urge the Commission to confirm the new ward on the boundaries proposed. The three polling districts that would unite with Staple Hill currently look to Staple Hill for a variety of facilities and utilise services there, for example the library, the local beat police office and the community engagement forums. Page Park is the major local leisure hub but its boundary is currently split between three wards; the Draft Recommendation rectifies this anomaly and sensibly makes it the geographical centre of our proposed ward. The area is predominantly residential, and Staple Hill is the closest main retail hub, as well as providing many nonconformist churches like the Salvation Army and the Sanctuary, for the whole of the proposed ward.

Southern areas

Hanham, Longwell Green and Parkwall & Warmley

Although the Draft Recommendation for **Hanham** is different from that we originally suggested, we acknowledge that it would facilitate better representation across the wider area, particularly in Kingswood, and on this basis we are content for its confirmation on the boundaries proposed.

We support the *principle* underlying the recommendations for **Longwell Green** and for **Parkwall & Warmley** but strongly urge the Commission to overturn its decision to split PAA and move some of its electors into Longwell Green. This split fails all three

of the Commission's tests: it breaks up an established social and electoral community, it worsens effective and convenient local government (it unnecessarily splits the parish ward of Cadbury Heath) and it worsens the electoral equality. We fully understand why the proponents have advocated it; we are at a loss as to comprehend why the Commission has adopted it. Cadbury Heath is one of the council's Priority Neighbourhoods which are based on indices of deprivation, and we and local parish councillors are concerned that the draft recommendation would dilute the council's focus on anti-deprivation work in the area. We therefore urge the Commission to amend its Draft Recommendations to keep all of the PAA electorate in the proposed Parkway & Warmley ward.

Kingswood, New Cheltenham and Woodstock

The Commission's Draft Recommendations to create Kingswood, New Cheltenham and Woodstock wards is similar in principle to the pattern proposed by Labour Group. We suggested at warding stage that residents on both sides of the A420 look to Kingswood town centre as the central focus of their community, that the main road is a phony boundary and that a west/east split of wards would better represent communities of interest. We are disappointed that the draft report credits this rationale solely to another submitter and we hope this can be corrected in the final version.

The Commission's proposals for these three wards are an improved version of our original pattern. We had refrained from splitting polling districts, but by splitting KCC the LGBCE has managed to create three compact wards which certainly reflect the interests and identities of these communities and deliver effective and convenient local government.

The arguments supporting the creation of **Kingswood** ward have been accepted at draft stage but bear repetition. Both sides of the main road in the town centre (Regent Street) equally serve as the commercial, retail and transport hub for this population. Moreover, the Kingswood Civic Centre, which houses the One-Stop-Shop and Police Station and will also soon accommodate the library, the Kingswood Health Centre next door and Kingswood Park and the Park Centre community hub opposite would all fall within the ward's boundaries, as we believe they should.

We welcome the proposal to retain **Woodstock** ward on revised boundaries. Young people from across the proposed ward attend the local schools on the Kings Oak campus located within it, and the whole area is in the BS15 postcode area.

Our Woodstock councillors have used their detailed knowledge to suggest some tiny tweaks to tidy up the boundaries which are submitted as an Appendix to this response.

The creation of a **New Cheltenham** ward is inspired, and is similar in basis to the historic Chiphouse ward on the old Kingswood Borough Council. In our warding submission we argued that the current Rodway ward is a strange amalgam of different communities. Its southern areas identify as Kingswood and are very similar in character to the rest of the proposed New Cheltenham ward, so we endorse the view that the new ward would reflect the interests and identity of the community. We previously argued that the western side of the current Siston ward looks to Kings'

Forest School as its primary school, and the Commission's recommendation helpfully puts the school's orbit into one ward.

We therefore urge the Commission to confirm the Draft Recommendations for these three wards on the boundaries proposed, having first applied the minor tweaks to Woodstock ward that we detail in the Appendix.

South eastern areas

Bitton & Oldland Common

The Draft Recommendation for **Bitton & Oldland Common** is to create a ward coterminous with the parish that would be within 0.5% of the average number. This was our suggestion at warding stage so we urge the Commission to confirm this recommendation.

Boyd Valley

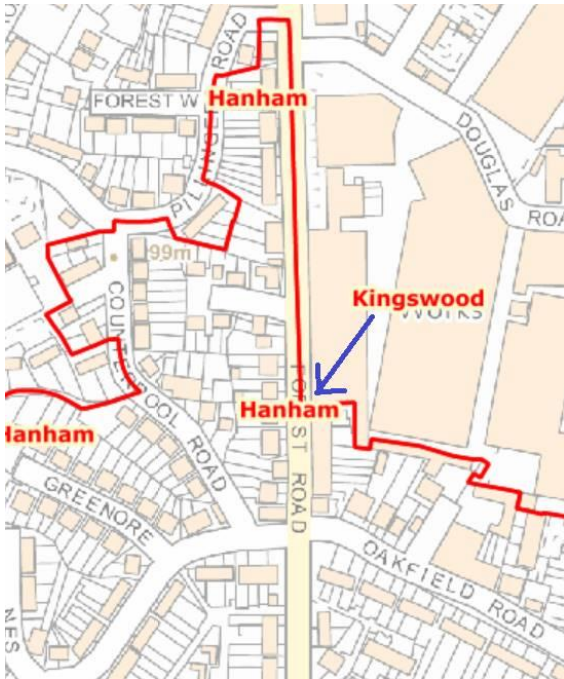
The Draft Recommendation for **Boyd Valley** is slightly different from that which we originally suggested, but we acknowledge that it would facilitate good representation across the wider area, and on this basis we are content for its confirmation on the boundaries proposed.

The recommendation would see the abolition of Siston ward. This makes sense because the current Siston is an anomalous one-seat pairing of rural voters and unquestionably urban areas. The Commission's proposals for dealing with the two distinct halves seem the most sensible solution to reflect the interests and identities of its different local communities, and we urge the Commission to maintain this view.

Appendix – very detailed minor tweaks to the Woodstock ward

1. We support bringing Cock Road (even numbers) back into Woodstock. It was removed in 2007 as it is a parished area, but it is separated from the rest of Oldland Parish by the A4174 ring road. This time around the LG BCE has recognised that having such a small section of Parkwall crossing the ring road does not provide for effective and convenient local government and that it makes sense to include it in the Woodstock district ward.
2. We acknowledge the sense of using current polling districts as the building blocks of new wards. This makes sense for 99% of the time, but it does result in some anomalies which we urge the Commission to address at this stage:
 - a. Dundry Close (a small cul-de-sac of 10 houses accessed off Court Road) is in WSF. Therefore, in the Draft Recommendations it will be in new Woodstock ward. However, Court Road (from which Dundry Close is accessed) is in WSC. Presently that is not an issue since both WSC and WSF are parts of Woodstock. However, the draft recommendations place that part of Court Road in the new Hanham ward. It would therefore make sense for Dundry Close to be transferred from the proposed Woodstock to the proposed Hanham.
 - b. Similarly, Cabot Close is currently in WSB but is accessed off of Counterpool Road (which is in WSC). The proposal has Counterpool Road moving into Hanham, but Cabot Close would be in the new Kingswood ward. It would therefore make sense for Cabot Close to be transferred from the proposed Woodstock to the proposed Hanham.
3. A further common sense tweak would be to move odd numbered houses on Forest Road (5 through to 25 – i.e. odd numbers in WSC north of the junction with Oakfield Road) into the new Kingswood ward from the new Hanham ward. This is because (see map overleaf) there is currently a huge housing development starting on Forest Road on the old industrial site. This will see lots of new houses fronting Forest Road (on its eastern side). The Commission's proposals, once this new housing is completed, would create an arbitrary ward boundary between number 5 Forest Road and whatever houses are built to the north of it. This small tweak would bring a few houses back into the Kingswood ward and compensate numerically for the loss of Cabot Close).

[Map overleaf]



4. The alternative is to keep Counterpool Road and the bit of Forest Road which is north of Footshill Rd / Oakfield Road all in the new Kingswood ward instead of having a bit of long embayment. Given that Kingswood ward electorate is below the average, moving Counterpool Road and (north) Forest Road from Hanham into Kingswood ward would result in improved electoral equality.
5. We fully support bringing Grimsbury Farm back into Woodstock. It has been anomalous having it in Parkwall, separated by the A4174 (see paragraph 1 above). The same is true of the few even numbered houses at the bottom of Baden Road. These are parished (Oldland), but would much better sit in the same district ward as the odd-numbered houses in the same street.
6. A lot of the bits of Woodstock moving into Hanham (WSC) (though not all – especially those at the top end of Forest Road) very probably consider themselves in Hanham.