

2021 Review of Draft Recommendations

Public Consultation 29/06/21 to 06/09/21

Submission by City of Wolverhampton Liberal Democrats

1. Introduction

The Liberal Democrats' Submission to the Initial Consultation was based on changes to wards by transferring complete polling districts (with one exception) to adjacent wards to achieve electoral balance. By so doing, the electorates were known, and the effect of such transfers would ensure the accuracy of the revised ward totals. Although it might not have been able to fully respect local communities, as far as possible these were taken into account, and it was good to see that some proposals were accepted.

It should be noted that the submitted 2026 electoral variation was - 4.8% to + 4.5%, all within +/- 5% of the average. Whereas the LGBCE variation had two wards at +9%, one at +8%, one at - 6% and one at - 7% with a range of 16% compared to 9.3%. It was understood that electoral equality was the prime consideration in the proposals. Comments on the Draft Recommendations will follow the order in which they are listed in the Report, instead of working upwards from the south-east, so that the knock-on effects of any changes could be determined progressively.

2. Wolverhampton Central

2.1 Blakenhall Ward: We support the minor changes proposed in the Goldthorn Hill area, leaving the rest of the ward unchanged, with a - 5% electoral variance.

2.2 Graiseley and Penn Wards: We support the minor changes between these two wards, by the proposal to put both sides of Coalway Road into the Graiseley ward.

2.3 Park Ward: We support the transfer of the Farndale Avenue estate to Park Ward. The only reason we originally included the Gatis Street area was because they were both included in the RBA polling district, which we kept intact. (see the Introduction)

2.4 St Peter's Ward: We support the additions to this ward of the Walsall Street area and the transfer of All Saints back with the City Centre, and using the railway as the eastern boundary. We were concerned that the south end of Vicarage Road (97-135 odds and 142-160 evens) would be cut off from the rest of Vicarage Road by All Saints joining St Peter's, and a small change to the boundary and the transfer of 55 electors from the Ettingshall Ward would solve the problem. However a residents' survey gave 3 houses in favour of the change, 3 houses not in favour of the change, 17 not bothered either way, and 5 not responding from letters put through every door on 25 August !

3. Wolverhampton North

3.1 Bushbury North and Oxley Wards: We accept the reasoning and support the changes to these two wards, but are concerned that they both have electoral variances of + 9%, very close to the 10% limit which could trigger a further Review.

3.2 Bushbury South & Low Hill Ward: We accept the revised boundary of this ward, which is a clearly recognisable shape, and an electorate close to the city average.

3.3 Fallings Park Ward: We support the minor changes proposed for this ward.

4. Wolverhampton North-east

4.1 East Park Ward: We accept the changes to this ward, and support the transfer of the Walsall Street area into St Peter's Ward. We do not agree that the Bilston Campus should be included in East Park. It should remain with Bilston in Bilston North, part of the WV14 postcode area, and the existing south-east border is easily recognisable.

4.2 Heath Town Ward: We accept the minor changes to the boundary of this ward.

4.3 Wednesfield North & South Wards: We support the minor changes to these two.

5. Wolverhampton South-east

5.1 Bilston East and North: For a start, Bilston East should be re-named **Bilston South** to complement Bilston North, as we proposed in our initial submission, but which was not recognised in paragraph 96 of the Draft Recommendations, attributing it only to the Conservative proposals. The Technical Guidance, paragraph 4.62 says "a 'West' should only be used where an 'East' has been proposed." The reverse should also be true. There is no Bilston West. Otherwise the changes are supported.

5.2 Ettingshall and Spring Vale Wards: We support the final version here. It was right to transfer the Sedgemoor Estate (Overfield Drive) to Spring Vale where it used to be, as it has no real connection to the rest of Ettingshall Ward. Most of the Liberal Democrats' initial proposals were based on transferring the whole of the ETA polling district to St Peter's Ward for reasons given earlier. Now that the LGBCE has added only the All Saints area, the other changes to Blakenhall and East Park are not needed. Certainly the residents have more in common with the City Centre than with Bilston.

6. Conclusion

Overall the Draft Recommendations represent a viable solution to the revision of Wolverhampton wards to achieve the required electoral equality. The LGBCE seems to have given more priority to community links as perceived, rather than the electoral numbers on their own. Some may find the changes provide an improvement in the way they are represented. It is believed that this will promote effective and convenient local government. The decision to keep 60 councillors and 20 wards helped in this respect.

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