

# Solihull

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## Comment text:

Please see attached.

## Attached Documents:

- Solihull Local Government Boundary Commission Opposition Response.pdf

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**Accompanying letter for draft ward boundary proposals for Solihull**

I am writing as Leader of the Opposition in relation to the ongoing boundary review for Solihull. This submission is one that has been developed following conversations with opposition Councillors and residents from all localities across the borough.

The reason an alternative to the Council's submission is being brought forward is that no opposition Councillors have voted for the Council's own proposals. There are a number of significant failings with the Council's proposals, which I would like to explain before providing the rationale for the alternative proposals.

**North Solihull**

The [2019 Indices of Deprivation](#) show that the Lower Super Output Areas ranked as "the most deprived" in the borough are in the locality referred to as "North Solihull". North Solihull is comprised of the wards Castle Bromwich, Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst & Fordbridge, and Smiths Wood. Castle Bromwich as a ward is the least deprived of the wards in North Solihull. It is also a ward that is surrounded by two neighbouring local authorities, sharing only one internal ward boundary (with Smiths Wood). Because of the relatively low availability of developable land in North Solihull, there is relatively less growth forecast in electorate size. Due to the constraints of Castle Bromwich, the whole exercise of redrawing boundaries needs to start from Castle Bromwich.

However, there is a consideration outside of the scope of the boundary review, that is pertinent to delivering a successful proposal. As noted by the [Electoral Reform Society](#), areas with higher levels of deprivation have lower rates of electoral registration. By delivering a proposal that significantly increases the dilution of votes in these areas, relative to other parts of the borough, the Council runs the risk of compounding many of the inequalities in these wards.

As a result, our proposal delivers a -0.04% variance across the 3 wards with the highest concentrations of LSOAs with the highest levels of deprivation, compared with the Council's 2.08% variance from the average by 2029.

### **Political neutrality of proposals and projected growth**

Solihull has a mix of political representation, with 9 of the 17 wards returning primarily Conservative Councillors, 5 returning primarily Green Councillors and 3 returning primarily Liberal Democrat Councillors over the past 4 years. There has been variation in this with the following:

**Castle Bromwich** returning 2 Green Councillors in the previous electoral cycle.

**Lyndon** returning 1 Conservative Councillor in the current electoral cycle.

**Kingshurst & Fordbridge** returning 1 Conservative (former Labour) Councillor in the current electoral cycle.

5 of the 17 wards are classed as “rural”, where the majority of development via the Local Plan is anticipated. The highest concentrations of projected housing growth are in the wards of Blythe (the current variance of which triggered this review) and Meriden. These two wards have returned 3 Conservative Councillors over the previous 3 elections. As a result of accommodating the projected growth in these wards, it is expected that the proposals will likely result in an initial reduction in the respective electors in Conservative majority areas.

The spatial element of how the Local Plan is proposed sees a mixed “urban extension” and expanding of rural settlements approach. This means the nature of the localities is due to change. The urban extension element is primarily located in the parishes of Dickens Heath and Cheswick Green. The rural settlement expansion is within Berkswell, and Balsall Common parishes. The expansion of urban wards into rural areas should only happen where development plans forecast the same result. The Councils proposals do not adhere to this, whereas this proposal does.

It is important not to split parishes, which this proposal minimises to the greatest extent possible, though it has not entirely been the case. The order of the wards is not alphabetical, but mirrors the order that the Council have used, for your ease of review.

The following is a detail of the proposals:

#### **Bickenhill**

Polling districts to remain:	BH03 (part – south of Coleshill Road and Land Lane, and southern portion of Elmdon Lane), BH04, BH05, BH06, BH07,
Polling districts to be added:	ME01, ME02
Polling districts to be removed:	BH01, BH02, BH03
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	10,511
Variance (no.):	-30
Variance %:	-0.28

Comments:	<p>The northern urbanised area has been added to the wards of Chelmsley Wood and Kingshurst &amp; Fordbridge, for the same reasons as demonstrated in the Council's proposals. BH03 has been split along Coleshill Road and Land Lane, as in LSOAs in the 2019 IMD mapping. The Council's version involves the separation of the Bickenhill and Marston Green parish, the locality of which is already split within the proposals, simply with a different dividing line.</p> <p>The PDs of ME01 and ME02 have remained together, as they currently are, with the rationale of ME02 being split being explained under Meriden.</p> <p>The development planned within the first phase of the Local Plan, located at Arden Cross, is what has held up the plan's adoption. For that reason the growth in this ward is potentially most in question, especially so given the cancelling of the northern leg of HS2.</p>
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### Blythe

Polling districts to remain:	BL01, BL04
Polling districts to be added:	SS03 and SS04 east of Bills Lane
Polling districts to be removed:	BL02, BL03
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	10,915
Variance (no.):	375
Variance %:	3.56
Comments:	<p>The development planned around the sites around Dickens Heath and Woods Farm are both in the Dickens Heath Parish Council area. However, the Woods Farm section is adjoining Bills Lane and impacts the locality of Shirley South and feeds into the same trunk roads.</p> <p>The fields between Dickens Heath and Shirley South are Council owned and have recently been given Country Park status. The shared common land gives a coherent focal point for the ward.</p>

### Castle Bromwich

Polling districts to remain:	CB01, CB02, CB03, CB04, CB05
Polling districts to be added:	SM01
Polling districts to be removed:	none
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	11,512
Variance (no.):	971
Variance %:	9.22
Comments:	<p>This proposal differs significantly from the Council in that it adds PD SM01 to the ward. The reasoning is that the Lanchester Park area is a shared area, benefiting both the CB03 and the PD SM01 (usually referred to as the Cars Estate, due to the roads being named after car models – with Castle Bromwich having historic links to the automotive industry).</p> <p>With Castle Bromwich being the least deprived ward in North Solihull it would be unjust for every northern ward, bar Castle Bromwich to grow, and for the variance to be so significantly adverse. Castle Bromwich still has the joint lowest forecast growth, so this still remains futureproofed as other wards continue to grow.</p> <p>Castle Bromwich is one of the geographically smallest wards, with largely contiguous development. Despite having a positive variance, the impact on representation is not as significant as in other areas.</p>

#### **Chelmsley Wood**

Polling districts to remain:	CW02, CW03, CW04
Polling districts to be added:	BH01, BH02 part (south of Moorend Avenue) BH03 part (south of Chelmsley Lane and north of Land Lane)
Polling districts to be removed:	CW01, CW05
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	11,200
Variance (no.):	659
Variance %:	6.25

Comments:	<p>Parts of Bickenhill Ward have historically been viewed as part of Chelmsley Wood. Councillors receive casework from Bickenhill residents who believe they live in Chelmsley Wood. This is most applicable to BH01, which moves to CW in its entirety.</p> <p>Marston Green has got a distinct identity, but within the Council's own proposals, it is split. This proposal at least keeps a more contiguous, and geographically coherent ward.</p>
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### **Dorridge & Hockley Heath**

Polling districts to remain:	DH02, DH03, DH04
Polling districts to be added:	BL03
Polling districts to be removed:	DH01
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	11,327
Variance (no.):	786
Variance %:	7.45
Comments:	<p>The ward remains largely unchanged, except for the swapping of DH01 and BL03. BL03 is the parish of Cheswick Green, which neighbours the parish of Hockley Heath. The Bentley Heath PD of DH01 will be added to Knowle, and the main part of Dorridge will be joined with Hockley Heath and Cheswick Green.</p> <p>Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath (abbreviated to KDBH) have a locality identity. However, there is no way to have all in one ward, as the existing wards, and the Council's proposals accept.</p> <p>This ward has already seen some of the growth in population from the Blythe Valley development, located in Hockley Heath parish. The development is in the B90 postcode, as is Cheswick Green, which has also seen equivalent development over recent years.</p>



	Consideration could be given to the northernmost portion of Cheswick Green, which has some development (logged in the Local Plan as site BL02 “Land South of Dog Kennel Lane), which could be added to the Shirley South ward. However, to do so would separate the Cheswick Green Parish Council.
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#### **Elmdon**

Polling districts to remain:	EL01, EL02, EL03, EL04
Polling districts to be added:	BH09
Polling districts to be removed:	none
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	9,797
Variance (no.):	-744
Variance %:	-7.05
Comments:	Elmdon only has the small portion of Bickenhill added, as in the Council’s proposals. Elmdon is an urban border locality, which means adding any of the rural parts to the ward would impact the coherence of it.

#### **Kingshurst & Fordbridge**

Polling districts to remain:	KF02, KF03, KF04, KF06
Polling districts to be added:	BH02 part (north of Moorend Avenue) BH03 part (north of Chelmsley Lane and north of Land Lane)
Polling districts to be removed:	KF01, KF05
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	10,148
Variance (no.):	-393
Variance %:	-3.72
Comments:	<p>The rationale for the changes to BH02 and BH03 have been explained under Chelmsley Wood and Bickenhill. The Council’s proposals accept parts of the PDs being transferred.</p> <p>These proposals make the ward more geographically coherent and the northern part of the ward, north of Babbs Mill, will move into Smiths Wood.</p>

#### **Knowle**

Polling districts to remain:	KN01, KN02, KN04
Polling districts to be added:	DH01
Polling districts to be removed:	KN03
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	11,277

Variance (no.):	736
Variance %:	6.98
Comments:	<p>As mentioned, KDBH has a local identity. This will see part of Bentley Heath added to the ward. This would be the most geographically compact of the rural wards, making getting around easier for those who represent the electorate.</p> <p>Moving out of the ward is the rural parish of Chadwick End. This prevents any separation of a Parish Council.</p>

### Lyndon

Polling districts to remain:	LY01, LY02, LY03, LY04, LY05
Polling districts to be added:	none
Polling districts to be removed:	none
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	10,557
Variance (no.):	16
Variance %:	0.15
Comments:	<p>Lyndon was the ward that varied least from the average in its existing form. It borders Birmingham and is separated by the canal from Olton, save for a small area west of Richmond Road, north of the canal. There is no need to change the existing boundaries.</p>

### Meriden

Polling districts to remain:	ME03, ME04, ME05
Polling districts to be added:	BH08, KN03
Polling districts to be removed:	ME01, ME02
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	9,448
Variance (no.):	1,093
Variance %:	-10.36
Comments:	<p>Balsall Common and Berkswell had been put together into the Meriden ward previously. Berkswell and Balsall Common are separated by the West Coast Mainline, and now also by HS2. The two parishes had previously tried to work together on a neighbourhood plan, but delivered separate plans in the end. There is a natural separation of the two localities.</p>



	<p>Chadwick End will be added to the ward, which is neighbours on its South Western edge already. It shares similar profiles with the same deciles on the IMD.</p> <p>Whilst this largest negative variance of any within the proposals, the ward does have the most significant amount of development planned within the Local Plan, which will leave the ward futureproofed as it grows closer to the median across the 17 wards.</p>
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#### **Olton**

Polling districts to remain:	OL01, OL02, OL03, OL04
Polling districts to be added:	none
Polling districts to be removed:	none
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	10,387
Variance (no.):	-154
Variance %:	-1.46
Comments:	Like Lyndon, Olton deviates from the average ward size in 2029 very little. It also borders Birmingham and does not require changing.

#### **St Alphege**

Polling districts to remain:	SA01, SA03, SA04, SA05, SA06
Polling districts to be added:	none
Polling districts to be removed:	SA02
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	9,882
Variance (no.):	-659
Variance %:	-6.25
Comments:	<p>PD SA02 is added to Shirley East, with SA05 remaining. This allows for the lowest variance across wards.</p> <p>It is worth bearing in mind that the emerging Solihull Town Centre Masterplan will see significant development in the town centre in the future, leading to the growth of this ward towards the average.</p>

#### **Shirley East**

Polling districts to remain:	SE01, SE02, SE03
Polling districts to be added:	SA02, SW03 part (east of Haslucks Green Road) SW04

Polling districts to be removed:	SE04
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	11,098
Variance (no.):	558
Variance %:	5.02
Comments:	<p>The part of St Alphege to be added is as per the Council's proposals. The difference is with Shirley Park, Parkgate and the east of Haslucks Green Road being added to the ward.</p> <p>Union Road and one side of Longmore is added to Shirley South, as opposed to Shirley West as in the Council's proposals.</p>

### Silhill

Polling districts to remain:	SH01, SH02, SH03, SH04, SH05
Polling districts to be added:	none
Polling districts to be removed:	none
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	10,088
Variance (no.):	-453
Variance %:	-4.29
Comments:	No changes are proposed as there is minimal variance.

### Smiths Wood

Polling districts to remain:	SM02, SM03, SM04, SM05
Polling districts to be added:	KF01, KF05
Polling districts to be removed:	SM01
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	10,232
Variance (no.):	-309
Variance %:	-2.93
Comments:	<p>SM01 PD is moved to Castle Bromwich for the reasons previously asserted. The norther part of the existing Kingshurst &amp; Fordbridge ward is added to the ward. This is where the "Kingshurst regeneration" project is, with the demolition of Kingshurst parade. The site currently sits within Smiths Wood, but is bordered by Kingshurst &amp; Fordbridge. This would also incorporate the park opposite.</p> <p>Babbs Mill would be the dividing line and would keep a more coherent geography than the Council's proposals.</p>

**Shirley South**

Polling districts to remain:	SS01, SS02
Polling districts to be added:	BL02, SE04
Polling districts to be removed:	SS03, SS04
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	10,260
Variance (no.):	-281
Variance %:	-2.66
Comments:	The ward is centred around Hillfield Park, with parts of Monkspath and Cranmore incorporated. Geographically it is not dissimilar in size or shape to the existing Shirley South ward, but is moved north and east to balance the variance.

**Shirley West**

Polling districts to remain:	SW01, SW02, SW03 part (west of Haslucks Green Road), SW05
Polling districts to be added:	SS04 part (west of Bills Lane)
Polling districts to be removed:	SW03 part (east of Haslucks Green Road), SW04
Electorate Forecast at 2029:	10,558
Variance (no.):	17
Variance %:	0.16
Comments:	<p>The changes see the area around Shirley Station more coherently linked and a more regular shape to the ward than the current proposals. The ward is bordered by Birmingham and Bromsgrove, with Solihull Lodge as a significant component of the population.</p> <p>These plans prevent the severance of the Stratford Road of the SE04 PD as in the Council's proposals.</p>

I hope you will give equal consideration to these alternative proposals that offer a more equitable distribution of voters across the borough, and localities.

Yours sincerely,

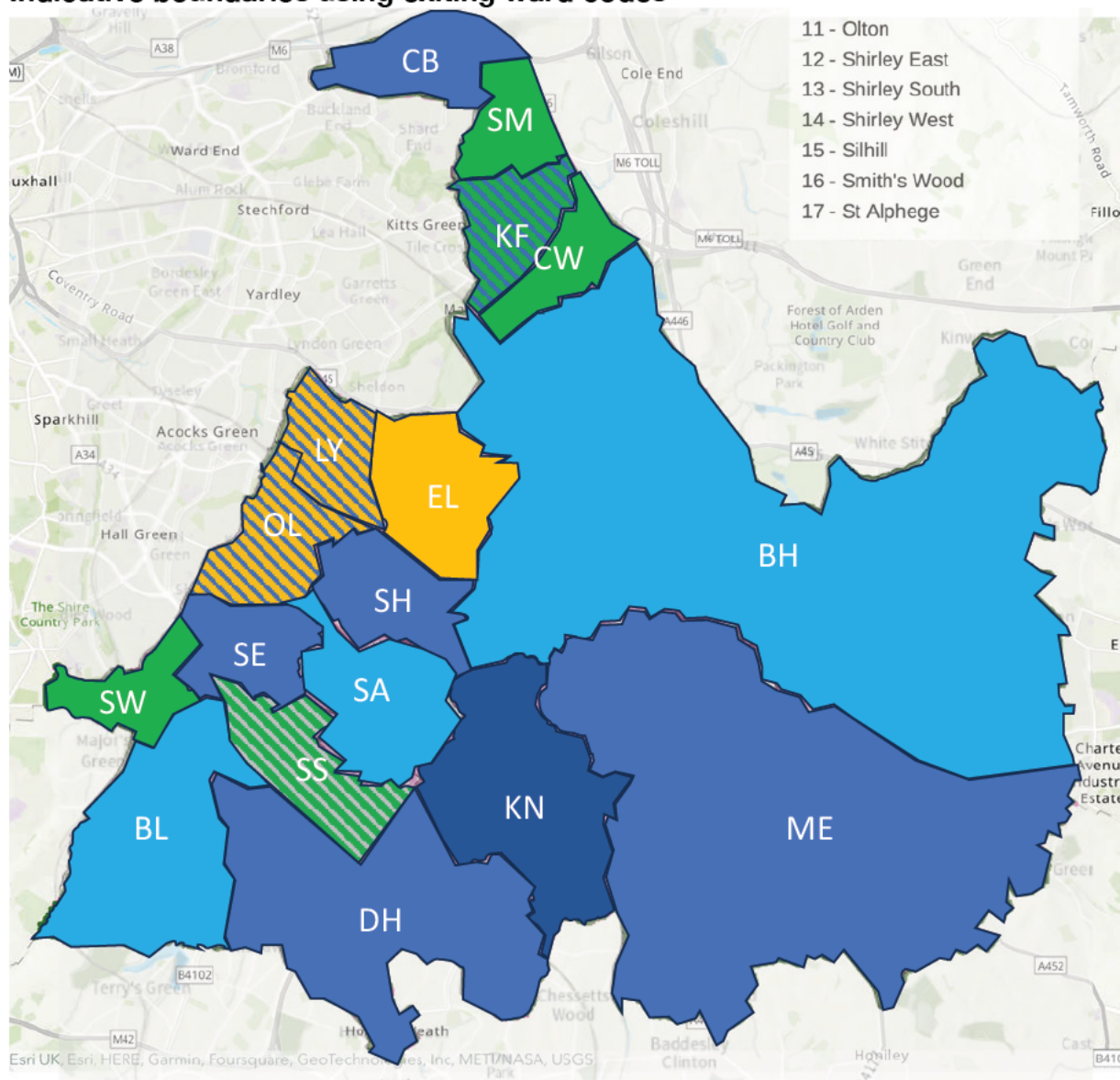


**Max McLoughlin**

Green Group Leader

Leader of the Opposition on Solihull Council

## Indicative boundaries using exiting ward codes



## Summary Table

Name of ward	Electorate 2023	Variance 2023	Electorate 2029	Variance 2029	Variance number
Bickenhill	9,651	1.60	10511	-0.29	-30
Blythe	12,006	26.39	10915	3.55	374
Castle Bromwich	8,997	-5.28	11512	9.21	971
Chelmsley Wood	8,997	-5.28	11200	6.26	659
Dorridge & Hockley Heath	8,772	-7.65	11327	7.45	785
Elmdon	9,287	-2.23	9797	-7.05	-744
Kingshurst & Fordbridge	8,978	-5.48	10148	-3.73	-393
Knowle	8,337	-12.23	11277	6.98	735
Lyndon	10,020	5.48	10557	0.15	16

Meriden	9,945	4.70	9448	-10.37	-1093
Olton	9,924	4.47	10387	-1.47	-154
St Alphege	10,354	9.00	9882	-6.25	-659
Shirley East	8,888	-6.43	11098	5.29	557
Silhill	9,458	-0.43	10088	-4.30	-453
Smith's Wood	8,495	-10.57	10232	-2.93	-309
Shirley South	9,565	0.69	10260	-2.66	-281
Shirley West	9,809	3.26	10558	0.16	17
Average	9499		10541		