

## South Staffordshire District Council

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### Comment text:

The submission which we understand is to be submitted by South Staffs District Council is, we believe, acceptable in terms of the distribution of seats after the review. Our supporting documents relate to the Codsall and Bilbrook area.

### Uploaded Documents:

**[Download \(https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download\\_document?file=draft%2F1627672180\\_greensub.docx\)](https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1627672180_greensub.docx)**

## Electoral reform submission – Bilbrook and Codsall

The following document supports and expands upon the document to be submitted by South Staffs District Council. That submission is, in our opinion, an acceptable response to the reduction in the number of councillors. The following suggestion has been discussed at Locality 4 meetings.

### Current arrangements

Six polling districts make up Bilbrook and Codsall.

Together, they comprise the Codsall Division.

They form three district and five parish wards.

The current electorate (as per ERC figures) for the polling districts is as follows.

(2027 figures italicised)

ACA1	Bilbrook - West	2017	<i>2281</i>
ACA2	Bilbrook - East	1222	<i>1223</i>
ACA3	Bilbrook - Lane Green	438	<i>439</i>
AQA	Codsall North	3477	<i>3501</i>
ARA	Birches Bridge	810	<i>899</i>
ASA	Histons Hill	1818	<i>1914</i>
This gives a total of		9782	<i>10257</i>

Assuming five councillors in total, that gives a current ratio of 1 : 1956 (*1 : 2051.*)

The current District ward split is Bilbrook East & West – totalling 3239 (*3504*)

Codsall North – totalling 3477 (*3501*)

Codsall South – Birches Bridge, Histons Hill and Bilbrook Lane Green, totalling 3066 . (*3252*)

None of these readily approaches the mean figure, so existing wards really do not offer a solution. However, there is an anomaly. Bilbrook Lane Green is in Bilbrook Parish (indeed it is one of the three parish wards) but Codsall South at District level.

Joining it to the remainder of the Bilbrook district ward would give 3777 (*3943*) – yielding ratios of 1 : 1888 (*1 : 1972*) for two councillors.

This reduces Codsall South to 2628 (*2813*) nowhere near the desired ratio for 1 or 2 councillors.

However, by creating a 3-member ward by merging Codsall North, Histons Hill, and Birches Bridge, the resulting electorate would be 6105 (*6314*) giving ratios of 1 : 2035 (*1 : 2105*) this would appear to satisfy the Commission's remit.

Bilbrook would initially be somewhat low in electoral numbers. However, there is a current development in progress in Bilbrook East , due to finish in 2022, of 167 houses. Using the standard 1.8 electors / dwelling, that would increase the initial ratio for 2 councillors in a single Bilbrook ward to 2038, and casts doubt on the forecast 2027 Bilbrook East figure of 1223 since it gives a figure in late 2022 of approximately 1370 in that poll district.

Note that this would not require any polling districts to be split, nor any of their boundaries to be moved, simply aligning the District wards with the respective parishes.

## Community identity – Bilbrook as a community.

Bilbrook and Codsall are separate communities and parishes, despite their proximity.

Both Parishes, individually, are in the process of drawing up Neighbourhood Plans. This suggests that, going forward, development may leave the two parishes looking substantially different.

They both have First and Middle schools, but share (with Perton) a single High School and a Catholic school.

Both Parishes have Village Halls. Bilbrook village hall regularly hosts Bilbrook playgroup, Dance Direct (Ballroom, Latin and Sequence), Let's Dance with Nicole (Musical Theatre for ages 7 – 14 & Senior Street Dance), "Tiptoes Dance Academy" and Zumba. The hall hosts the Parish council office and meetings, and is available for hire. It is owned and administered by a charity, Twentyman Playing Fields Association. There are children's play facilities on the same site, and elsewhere there are a Multi-Use Games Area, Skate Park and 2 football pitches.

Bilbrook has a main line railway station. Regular bus services serve the parish, connecting it with Wolverhampton and the wider area.

The Parish has a C of E church and associated Church Hall (some groups that usually meet in Bilbrook Church Hall are currently suspended because of Covid-19 regulations, but children's dance and Zumba continue).

At the last full Remembrance Day service (2019) no less than 30 wreaths were laid at Bilbrook War Memorial which speaks of widespread community identification with the parish, as does the considerable turnout for the inauguration of the annual Christmas illuminations.

The village has local shopping facilities, but shoppers tend to visit neighbouring communities (such as Perton, Pendeford and Fordhouses) for "big shops" at major supermarkets, though fast food outlets, day-to-day shops, hairdressers etc. are well represented.

Bilbrook has a veterinary surgery, medical centre and dental surgery. There are two sheltered housing facilities, a Park Homes site and a gated senior citizens community.

Bilbrook has an allotment garden site, adjacent to the County Council recycling centre (which is on land owned by the Parish council.).

Given the proximity between the two, inevitably, some groups and facilities are shared with Codsall – the Scout group, although situated in Bilbrook, serves both (as does the High School, as already evidenced). The fire station, too, is in Bilbrook. Some voluntary groups straddle the divide, such as the WV8 Wombles, a volunteer litter picking group (both villages are in the WV8 postcode area).

Bilbrook has a conservation group, Friends of Bilbrook, who are particularly active in the care and development of Bilbrook Jubilee Wood and the Moat Brook, where the presence of otters has recently been confirmed. Individuals from the group have also cleared, planted and cared for areas of roadside planting, which have been widely welcomed by local people.

A recent, welcome, development is Bilbrook Initiatives hub, best new voluntary body in the Support Staffordshire volunteer awards. They give away self soothe kits to help with emotional regulation and anxiety, run the Wellbeing Coffee Club fortnightly (a support group to help with loneliness and social inclusion and those who feel anxious.) Over 90% of attendees are from Bilbrook. In collaboration with local business, a delivery service of hot food for the elderly was set up during lockdown, and remains available. Food parcels for families with children entitled to free school meals were distributed during lockdown periods. Plans for a Bilbrook Community Day have been postponed awaiting Covid-19 measures being relaxed, as has a meeting due shortly to discuss future projects.