

## **BOLTON CONSERVATIVE GROUP RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT LGBCE PROPOSALS FOR BOLTON**

### INTRODUCTION

The Conservative Group recognises the principles set out in the Bolton Electoral Review Members Briefing and presentation to members in particular the criteria set out at page 6:

*Interests and identities of local communities, and*

*Effective and convenient local government*

We also noted the issues highlighted by the LGBCE in establishing ward boundaries as set out, inter alia, at page 9:

*Transport links*

*Shared interests*

*Community groups*

*Facilities*

We recognise the problems of facilitating electoral equality whilst maintaining communities of interest and criteria noted above given the range of electorates and varied projected growth in the existing wards during the 5 year projection.

To this end the Conservative Group has serious concerns about the breaking of strong community ties in particular in the existing Astley Bridge Ward. Indeed, in a number of ways the draft proposals are directly at variance with the principles set out at page 9 of the Bolton Electoral Review Members Briefing and referred to at paragraphs 56 and 110 of the Draft Recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Bolton.

Paragraph 56 states ...

*"...proposals would have no internal access to..."*

Whilst paragraph 111 states ....

*"...this area would have limited road access to the rest of the ward."*

We therefore address these matters in detail.

### **ASTLEY BRIDGE AND SOUTH TURTON**

We begin this critique with two areas we refer to as the Whitehill and Templecombe estates in the present Astley Bridge ward. The former built in the late 1960's and the latter during the late 1990's into the early 2000's. Both estates have vehicular access only from the frontage of Belmont Road A 6xc. Indeed condition 7 of the planning consent for the Templecombe estate, then known as Springfield Heights in March 1989 specifically states:

- a) *vehicular access to the site for all residents and visitors shall only be from Belmont Road ..... referred to in condition 7; and*

b) *except for emergency use there shall be no vehicular access to or from the site via Cow Lane, Whitehill House, Springfield Road, Threlkeld Road, Farnborough Road, Kermoor Avenue or Craighall Road.*

This is re-iterated in a letter to the ward councillor from the Borough Solicitor dated 13 March 1990. In a further letter dated 25 June 1990 the Borough Solicitor confirms that as a result of enforcement action commenced the developer confirmed that Farnborough Road was not to be used for vehicular access and an advertisement confirms that the address for Springfield Heights was Belmont Road.

This is important because it means the ONLY vehicular access from the two estates to the proposed South Turton Ward is via Belmont Road, south to Bar Lane, a narrow road, to Blackburn road thence north. A distance of around 2 miles. An alternative route via High View to Sharples Avenue is via a narrow unadopted road passing close to a children's nursery. The final option would be to travel north, via Belmont Road A675, leaving the Borough to Belmont, then via a narrow country lane to join the A666 travel south to re-enter the Borough and the proposed South Turton ward, a distance of over 5 miles.

This is clearly at variance with the statement at page 10 of the Bolton Electoral Review Members Briefing that:

*Internal access. Recommendations for ward boundaries will normally provide for people to move between all parts of the ward without having to venture outside the ward. This normally means vehicular access by road.*

It seems evident therefore that the two estates have no links with the remainder of and have no community of interest with the proposed South Turton ward.

In terms of pedestrian links the issues are similar. Many of the residents of the Whitehill Lane area are elderly yet the topography of the area makes pedestrian access equally problematic. The hilly nature of the area rising from 149m, 488 ft, at Blackburn Road/Springfield Road to 191m, over 620 ft, at the vehicle access platform at Templecombe Drive/Belmont Road means that residents see Belmont Road, even with a less frequent bus service and not Blackburn Road, as their normal travel route even with many more bus services along Blackburn Road.

Such poor links would make it far more difficult for an elected member to represent the proposed South Turton Ward. Without access to a car it would be virtually impossible to properly service and represent the entire ward. Pre Coronavirus Astley Bridge councillors held a regular monthly surgery at the Drummond Street Community Centre. This was easily accessed by residents via Belmont Road. As there is no public building or facility in the Templecombe or Whitehill area such a surgery would not be possible and residents would need to leave the ward to attend a surgery in Bromley Cross by a route described above.

Thus it is that all transport links from these two estates both by car or bus, are via Belmont Road south to Astley Bridge. This serves as the major shopping centre recognised by Bolton Council as a District Centre with stores including Asda. Lidl, The Range and many small local shops such as, butchers and confectioners.

As a District Centre these shops serve much of north Bolton from Heaton in the west to Brightmet in the east, the northern town centre to north beyond the Borough such as Belmont.

Many faiths have places of worship in Astley Bridge including St Paul's CofE, Holy Infant and St Anthony RC, Astley Bridge Baptist Church, Bank Top United Reform Church and the Pentecostal Church in Hoyle street. Most residents see these as at or close to the natural centre of Astley Bridge.

For recreation Astley Bridge Park, Astley Bridge Bowling Club and Bar Lane Bowling Club are all south of these two estates on or accessed from Belmont Road.

There are key issues relating to these areas. For example the speed of traffic on Belmont Road has been a long standing concern to local residents. This affects residents on both sides of Belmont Road. The draft proposals would result in the road being split between two new wards with the Horrocks Fold area to the west being split from these two areas to the east of Belmont Road. Working with residents, Astley Bridge councillors supported by GM Police and Bolton Highways Department have been working to address the problem with speed warning signs and a recent GM Police speed enforcement campaign.

This is seen as a clear indication of the close relationship with Belmont Road as a uniting not dividing line.

It is also noted that the proposed boundary to the rear of properties on Kermoor Avenue and Eastgrove Avenue is not well defined. We note that at paragraph 74 of the Draft Recommendations for Bolton describes such a boundary between the existing Tonge with the Haulgh and Darcy Lever with Little Lever wards.

*"....the current boundary ... which runs between the properties on Kirkwall Drive and Strawberryhill Road. We do not consider this to be a clear and identifiable boundary...."*

The Conservative groups concurs with this assessment.

The electorate of the Whitehill Lane is on the 2020 register is 338 and that of the Templecombe estate 623. The effect of re-uniting these two areas would be to add 961 to Astley Bridge. In addition 339 voters in the remainder of polling district AC of Astley Bridge would need to be transferred from the proposed South Turton, a total of 1300. This is set out in the appendix. It is unlikely that any growth will occur in these areas due to development given the nature of the areas.

To the east of Blackburn Road at Eagley Bank bounded by Blackburn Road and Andrew Lane a further major issue arises with the proposed transfer of this area to the proposed South Turton Ward.

This area, known as Eagley Bank was traditionally home to workers at Eagley Mills including the Mill Manager, but any such links have been long since broken. Over 50 years ago Bolton Council closed Andrew Lane at Eagley Brow to through traffic from Eagley Way. Thus the name has historic links but does not have current ties with the Eagley Mills residential complex. All vehicular movement from Eagley Bank has to be south to Astley Bridge via Andrew Lane and then Blackburn Road and the district centre. It would again be necessary for a resident of this area to leave the ward in order to travel by car into the South Turton ward.

The proposed transfer of the area bounded by Blackburn Road, Andrew Lane and Eagley Way would take the heart from the Astley Bridge community.

Andrew Lane Park is the venue for many Astley Bridge events, not least the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting. This event is attended by upwards of 3/4000 local residents. Organised by the Friends of Astley Bridge and ward councillors the event involves local groups such as Team Eagley Bank, local scouts and all the local schools. As well as supporting these events the schools, High Lawn, The Oaks, Sharples CP, Sharples High, St Pauls CofE, Holy Infants and St Anthony RC, and Thornleigh RC High, as

well as Astley Bridge Baptists Sunday School and local nurseries produce artwork, not just at Christmas. Each year paintings and artwork from these are mounted around the Christmas trees at the junction of Blackburn Road and Andrew Lane for Christmas, Easter, Remembrance time and special events such as HM The Queen's Jubilee.

The Christmas event raises funds for many charities and without this area being included in Astley Bridge such an event would not have a venue. Whilst accepting that school catchment areas are not considered as material the simple fact that all the Astley Bridge schools and many voluntary groups come together illustrates the strong community of interest and why this area is a key community within Astley Bridge.

The impact of retaining Eagley Bank in Astley Bridge would be to add a further 369 electors as set out in the appendix.

It is accepted that the proposed transfer of the properties to the north of Eagley Way has some logic being closely linked to the Eagley Mills residential development. Wakefield Mews, Threadfold Way, and Bridge Mill are all part of former Eagley Mills complex. The electorate of this area is just 128.

The above sets out the powerful case to support the local community and largely retain the current Astley Bridge Ward as proposed in the initial representations by the Conservative Group. The effect of these proposals would be to add 1669 voters to the draft proposals for Astley Bridge.

Clearly this will have direct consequences for both the proposed Astley Bridge and South Turton wards. We address this by proposing that the Crompton ward polling districts of ED and EE be transferred from the proposed Astley Bridge ward to the proposed Halliwell and South Turton wards respectively.

The net effect of these proposals would give an electorate for Astley Bridge of 10295. (see Appendix 1 for details)

In contrast to the strong community of interest set out above, Hall i'th' Wood has no such links to Astley Bridge. The Astley Bridge District Centre serves a wider area so cannot alone be considered a major factor. Residents of Hall i'th' Wood are more likely to access shops on Tonge Moor Road including the recently refurbished Co-op and newly opened Farm Foods as well as local shops.

The bus links to Astley Bridge are poor with an hourly service only. This service then travels to Smithills before travelling to Bolton town centre. It is unlikely that a resident of Hall i'th' Wood would see this as a convenient service. By comparison several services are accessed along Tonge Moor Road direct to Bolton Town centre. The modern library at Castle Hill, a short distance south on Tonge Moor Road, health facilities at Hall i'th' Wood Medical Centre are within close walking distance.

In addressing these perceived flaws in regard to the proposed Astley Bridge ward, a view not just of ward councillors but one widely expressed by residents of Astley Bridge it is necessary to consider the impact on the wards top the east of the Borough. Whilst the Conservative group considers the draft proposals as submitted we recognise the published draft proposals have a number of valid points. To this end we offer the following as a possible solution although we also accept that there could be other viable proposals.

#### **SOUTH TURTON, BRADSHAW and BROMLEY CROSS, BREIGHTMET and TONGE with the HAULGH**

Hall i'th' Wood could be considered a somewhat detached area and has been included in various wards in recent reviews. It does have strong links with the area to the east of the railway to Tonge Moor Road. This is the current polling district EE. Hall i'th' Wood to the west of the railway was

previously part of the existing Bromley Cross ward, was then in the Tonge with the Haulgh ward and is currently in Crompton ward. On balance the Conservative Group considers that to link Hall I'th' Wood to South Turton (the existing Bromley Cross ward) is the most logical option.

If polling district EE with 1331 electors is transferred from the proposed Astley Bridge Ward and the boundary is created along Tonge Moor Road, Bradshaw Brow and Turton Road to the point at which Turton Road meets the railway a clearly defined boundary would be created. This would transfer an additional 1124 electors into South Turton from the proposed Bradshaw and Bromley Cross ward.

The net effect on South Turton would be a ward of 10896 electors. To this end we consider that the current historic names of Bromley Cross ward and Bradshaw ward are clearly recognised locally and thus should be retained.

In order to redress the loss of 1124 voters to South Turton we would propose that the ward of Bradshaw and Bromley Cross, which we would rename Bradshaw, would retain the existing polling district of BD consisting of 1420 electors. This is a well-established link which has proved a workable model.

To this end the initial proposals from the Conservative Group for Brightmet, Tonge with Haulgh and Darcy Lever with Little Lever would address the consequential effects.

#### **HALLIWELL and SMITHILLS**

In addressing the issues above in respect to Astley Bridge we would suggest that the area of the current Crompton ward bounded by Crompton Way, Blackburn Road and Astley Brook as well as the properties in the Valley within the current Crompton ward, which the draft proposals would include in Astley Bridge ward, should be part of the proposed Halliwell ward. To counter this we would propose that the area currently in the Smithills ward bounded by Vallets Lane, Ivy Road and Church Road should remain as part of Smithills ward.

This would compensate for the proposed retention in the Heaton ward of the area bounded by Chorley Old Road, New Hall Lane and Devonshire Road as detailed in the proposals for the west of the Borough set out below.

#### **HORWICH & BLACKROD and HORWICH NORTH**

There is much in the proposed boundary changes to Bolton West that we think makes sense. We particularly think the proposals around Horwich & Blackrod and Horwich North need no further alteration and we support both the boundary changes and the change of name from Horwich North East to Horwich North. We therefore accept the changes to the two Horwich wards as laid out and offer no alternative

#### **WESTHOUGHTON SOUTH**

We largely accept and understand the changes to Westhoughton South in particular the unification of the Washacre Estate. We would though press the following case; we do not follow the logic of changing the existing boundary between Westhoughton South and the proposed Westhoughton North and Hunger Hill from the existing King Street to the proposed Market Street. Given the town centre is about to undergo significant development it makes sense to us, to retain the whole of Westhoughton Town Centre within the proposed Westhoughton South ward. This would increase the size of the proposed ward of the 2027 projection to 10,884 a variance of just 1%. Changing the existing boundary feels like an unnecessary complication.

## **LOSTOCK SOUTH HEATON and CHEW MOOR**

The proposed Lostock South Heaton and Chew Moor ward looks to us the most uncomfortable of the proposed wards, the fact that you need 3 names to describe it illustrates our concerns about the cohesiveness of this ward and its sense of community. It is in our view, a meaningful change to the existing ward, without any tangible benefits and we believe there is a simpler alternative.

We would propose the following alterations, that Chew Moor Village, which has its own separate identity to Lostock, remains as part of the proposed Westhoughton North and Hunger Hill ward. This produces a significant net decrease of 730 to the 2027 proposed electorate. We would offset this decrease by retaining part of 3OD1 polling district the Heaton area, within the proposed Lostock South Heaton and Chew Moor Ward. A net increase of 787 to the proposed 2027 electorate.

These streets would include:

Chorley Old Road 65

Malvern Avenue 52

Devonshire Road 151

Melrose Avenue 99

Sutherland Road 55

Brighton Avenue 60

Welbeck Road 62

Tenby Avenue 42

Rowsley Road 28

Radley Close 18

Waddington Road 5

Lowdnes Street 6

Cromdale Avenue 17

Eastbourne Grove 36

Lonsdale Road 17

Albert Road West 14

New Hall Lane 60

This would have the overall net effect of changing the proposed 2027 electorate by a net addition of 57. It would make the ward more cohesive, as it would be based on the two areas of the existing Heaton and Lostock ward, namely Heaton and Lostock. We would therefore propose the retaining the existing name of Heaton and Lostock for the new proposed ward.

## **WESTHOUGHTON NORTH and HUNGER HILL**

We see in this ward a far simpler solution that retains the cohesion of the existing ward and yet still fits the required criteria of ward equalisation. We firmly believe Chew Moor whose identity stands alone and very much sees itself as a distinct village separated from the rest of Lostock remains part of the ward and we propose it remains part of the new ward of Westhoughton North and Hunger Hill and see no pressing need to break up an established and identifiable ward in the proposed way. This addition would add a net 730 people to the proposed 2027 electorate.

To offset this increase, we would also retain as described above, the existing King Street boundary between the proposed Westhoughton South and Westhoughton North and Hunger Hill ward reducing the proposed 2027 electorate by 228. These two alterations give the ward an overall net gain of 502 making the proposed 2027 electorate 11,240. This would make it a large ward but by no means the largest under your current proposals with Astley Bridge, Great Lever, Horwich North and Hulton all having similar or larger numbers of electors.

Furthermore under these proposals we see no need to change the name of the ward to Westhoughton North and Hunger Hill and we therefore propose to retain the existing name of Westhoughton North and Chew Moor.

### **SMITHILLS & NORTH HEATON**

We propose two further changes to this ward the removal of the streets highlighted above in polling district 3OD1 from the proposed Smithills and North Heaton Ward into the proposed South Heaton Lostock and Chew Moor Ward. In addition we would restore the existing boundary between the existing Smithills ward and the existing Halliwell ward by including the 404 voters in the area bounded by Vallets Lane Church Road and Ivy Road. These changes would have the effect of reducing the proposed 2027 electorate from 11,059 to 10,676. Having removed these streets in North Heaton from the proposed Smithills and North Heaton Ward we would propose retaining the name of Smithills.

### **NAMING OF WARDS**

We believe that names which reflect local communities, have historic links and whenever possible afford continuity enables residents to relate more accurately to the ward. To this end we believe avoiding repetition assists this. For this reason we believe the name Blackrod and Middlebrook is a more recognisable name reflecting the growing communities of interest in that ward.

### **CONCLUSION**

From the foregoing it can be seen that the two major issues in the draft proposals arise from the proposed split of the communities of Astley Bridge in the north east of the Borough and Chew Moor in the south west. We offer counter proposals which address these issues and seek to offer workable consequential alternatives. We recognise that there may be other possible changes in addressing these two major concerns which we consider are fundamental. The Conservative Group recognises that there is much in the draft proposal that make sense and we would support but we believe if the above measures are adopted, existing names can remain largely unchanged. Where no reference is made to a proposed ward we accept the draft proposals. Existing ward boundaries are tweaked to help equalise numbers rather than radically altered and the cohesiveness of the area remains in balance. Whilst our electorates are based on the registers published in 2020 we believe the five year projection would still be met under the above proposals.



**ST to AB**

Chelwood Close	22		
Maysbury Close	45		
Midford Drive	140		
Pitcombe Close	35		
Radstock Close	94		
Shepton Close	24		
Templecombe Drive	263	623	
Wincanton Drive			
Birkett Close	20		
Birkett Drive	27		
Brcken Close	12		
Glencoyne Drive	16		
Greystoke Drive	46		
Oakbank Drive	12		
Summerhill	6		
Summerhill Close	9		
Thirispot Close	15		
Threlkeld Road	54		
Whitehill Lane	45		
		262	
Belmont Road - 358A to Mooredge, Fernhill	49		
Engledene	9		
Fernhill Farm	9		
High Houses	4		
High View	5		
		76	961
Craighall Road	34		
Cubbins Farm Barn	2		
Cubbins Cottage	2		
Cubbiins Farm	1		
Farnborough Road	89		
Kermoor Avenue	95		
Longworth Lane	23		
Staveley Avenue	72		
Springfield Road	21	339	1300
Andrew Lane	50		
Blackburn Road	24		
Eagley Bank	17		
Kellet Street	1		
Makants Barn	2		
Makants Farm	3		
Northland Road	9		
Old Eagley Mews	20		
Ollerton Street	45		
Ollerton Terrace	44		
Park Row	20		
Park Terrace	10		
Park View	46		
Playfair Street	10		
Sandbanks	12		
The Gardens	9		
Westcliffe Road	47	369	1669

**SOUTH TURTON**

DD	Aire Drive	77		
	Bradshaw Brow	20		
	Cherry Tree Way	51		
	Dearncamme Close	29		
	Ellerbeck Close	42		
	Fossgill Avenue	51		
	Galindo Street	23		
	Hebble Close	31		
	Hondwith Close	22		
	Jethro Street	2		
	Laburnham Park	111		
	Linden Walk	21		
	Oaks Avenue	106		
	Oaks Lane	44		
	Ormod Street	57		
	Redshaw Avenue	25		
	Ryeburn Drive	62		
	Turton Heights	172		
	Turton Road 3-129	86		
	Winterburn Avenue	54		
	Wrath Close	38	1124	1124

**Halliwell to Smithills**

Arkwright Close	12		
Cope Bank	31		
Cope Bank East	3		
Dudwell Close	19		
Church Road 1-39	23		
Garside Grove	18	11 Chuch Rd SB/SD	
Holly Grove	28	12	
Ivy Road	72	43 Ivy Road SB/SD	
Keighley Street	16	29	
Kingswear Drive	12		
Longford Avenue	33		
Rathybank Close	16		
Sunnybank Road	4		
Sunnyside Road	41		
Thornley Avenue	34		
Thornley Mews	6		
Tiverton Walk	18		
Vallets Lane 175-205	18	404	