

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [reviews](#)  
**Subject:** Rossendale Borough Council - Proposal for the Shawforth and Facit and Healey and Whitworth wards to be reviewed as one united Whitworth ward.  
**Date:** 04 December 2022 13:05:11

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The River Spodden rises at Freeholds Top on the northern edge of Shawforth Moor in Whitworth and flows down through what is known as the Whitworth Valley as far as Healey Dell, from where it turns off and soon merges with the River Roch. The Spodden forms a natural boundary along which the whole of Whitworth nestles, from Shawforth down to Healey Corner. The Spodden's name derives from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning spear and probably relates to the straightness of the river as it flows down the four and a half mile stretch of our Whitworth Valley. The River Spodden was fundamental in the development of the current township along the narrow valley, as its waters powered various industries down its course, then attracting migrant workers and creating settled communities. Whitworth's one and only main road follows this narrow valley and is served by a regular bus service, which helps to transport Whitworth residents to the various community activities and events on offer through the valley today. However, Whitworth can be affected by floods and is often snowbound in winter, cut off from onward travel in either direction. At these times, the bus services have been severely affected and even stopped when roads have become impassable. There have been calls for action both from the Council and from local community groups when Whitworth residents have rallied to support those at risk of social isolation when our town has become geographically isolated by heavy snows or floods. From Shawforth to Healey Corner, there is a sense of community responsibility, together with an instinctive, deeply-embedded caring culture and shared civic values often lacking elsewhere in today's fast-moving world.

I live in the Tonacliffe area in the south of Whitworth near to Healey Corner. When the Central Methodist Church closed on Market Street in 1984, I transferred to Shawforth Methodist Chapel, where I was made to feel very welcome. Many of the families in the congregation were already known to me, both from teaching at Whitworth High School and from outside-work interests.

Shawforth Chapel has always been an active church with lots of coffee mornings and community events to attract additional weekend and weekday visitors. For example:

- I am a member of the Whitworth Community Choir (WCC) which practices in Shawford Chapel every Tuesday evening from 7pm till 9pm. The WCC performed carols and Christmas songs there on 26 November as part of the Christmas Fair event, which was well supported by residents from the whole Whitworth Valley.
- Shawforth Chapel has a toddlers' group which is well loved by young families from Whitworth.
- On Thursdays, Little Bookworms, an interactive storytelling class which helps children lose themselves in the wonderful world of books, holds sessions there for 0-5 year olds that are very popular in our valley.
- On the last Thursday in the month in the evening, I'm aware that a Model Flying Club meets there as well, as one of my neighbours attends this.
- On Friday mornings, Shawforth Chapel have a community drop-in where you can get a cup of tea or coffee and some toast with time to catch up for a natter.
- On Saturdays, there are seasonal coffee mornings and lunches, which are well advertised through the valley and in the Whitworth Valley News.

- The Whitworth Rushcart performers also practice in Shawforth Chapel for their annual celebrations. Whitworth residents turn out in droves for the Whitworth Rushcart special events in September each year, featuring singing, dancing and partying. The Rushcart events celebrate the former use of rushes to keep stone floors warm in homes and in churches, where they were also used for people to kneel on from the time of William the Conqueror to the time of Elizabeth I. Use of rushes in homes died out by the 1800s. Whitworth is one of only four townships in the UK, the others are Sowerby Bridge, Littleborough and Saddleworth - all within close proximity, to regularly hold these festivals and ours is the only one to use heather, a natural resource gathered from our moors, rather than rushes.

Because of all proactive outreach work, Shawforth Chapel is viewed as a valuable community resource and meeting place by many residents and community groups in this valley.

Friends in Shawforth frequently walk with me down the Greenway path and cycleway up Old Lane and then from the boundary stone marking Whitworth's upper valley boundary down to Cowm Reservoir and Healey Dell, all beautiful areas in Whitworth. We also like to exercise at Whitworth's swimming pool usually finishing off with lunch at a local café, or pub. We also enjoy the many community activities at Shawforth Chapel, The Ashcroft and Whitworth Library. It's always lovely to meet other friends on the way or at our planned destination – it's a tight-knit, friendly community here and it's impossible not to meet others you know when out walking. We also often support our local productions of the Whitworth Amateur Musical and Dramatic Society, which are of a consistently excellent standard with performers sourced from the whole town.

Every May, apart from during the Covid-19 restrictions, there is the Skyline walk around Whitworth, which alternates from being a clockwise to an anticlockwise route each year. I am hoping to again do the walk in 2023. It is a challenging walk of about 14 miles which starts from Lobden Golf Club and then, depending on the direction of the route, goes through Healey Corner, up to Prickshaw, along Rooley Moor as far as the Whitworth and Bacup boundary, then up over the other side of Whitworth Valley, via Middle Hill, Hades Hill and Brown Wardle before the descent back down to Lobden Golf Club for pie, peas and a drink. It is a fantastic circular walk of the hills surrounding the whole township of Whitworth and encompassing the best of our community's moorland landscape. On sunny days, it's the nearest place to heaven. 500 walkers usually join in the walk, which is organised by Whitworth Sports Council. There are four checkpoints on the way, including a very welcome one at the halfway point in Shawforth, where refreshments are also served. These checkpoints are continually marshalled by local residents till every walker has safely returned or been accounted for,

As a founding member of the Friends of Whitworth Library Group (FoWLG), it has been heartening to witness the public level of support throughout the Whitworth Valley, which ultimately both saved our community's library from closure in 2016 and progressed its development into a vibrant community hub today. From Shawforth to Healey Corner, Whitworth residents gave their full support in FoWLG's original campaign to save our library and they continue to regularly join in with the many and varied activities and events held in our library, which are widely publicised online and in hardcopy, such as the flyers in public meeting places and on community notice boards and in the Whitworth Valley News, across our township.

The Whitworth Valley News (WVN), is a quarterly magazine, compiled and produced by the Town Council. The magazine is hand-delivered to all households in Whitworth and aims to keep our townsfolk up to speed on recent developments within the town and on forthcoming events, and it also carries reports from local schools, churches, and community groups, together with advertisements for local companies.

FoWLG have sent quarterly submissions to WVN to promote the library ever since it came into being as a campaign group in January 2016. The regular library events and activities

always carry a full-page spread and additional 200-word special articles are also put forward, such as for the library's Christmas 2022 events which were already planned at the time of submission. There is always a two months' delay from time of submission to distribution of the magazine. Shawforth Chapel regularly features in the WVN too – for example, the current Winter 2022 edition carries news of its regular events and drop-in facilities.

I am also a member of 'Whitty Bloomers' with our first Whitworth in Bloom entry to the Britain in Bloom RHS competition in 2019. With other local volunteers, I help to weed, plant and generally maintain all the different community gardens along the four-and-a-half-mile valley stretch from the boundary stone at Shawforth down to Healey Corner. It's lovely to see residents living nearby the various community gardens acknowledging our efforts and generously offering support, either by getting involved with the work at the time, or by frequent watering of newly planted areas in dry weather, providing much-needed brews for thirsty Whitty Bloomers, and allowing access to outside water taps at time of planting. As with all our community garden areas, in Shawforth there is always a colourful display through each season to welcome people entering the top of the valley end of our township, including a rockery; a bicycle display; mixed planters; a WW1 'Tommy' planted up with seasonal flowers to commemorate those Whitworth residents who died in the war; and a community orchard, where there's an apple tree, named Pomme et Irène (Apple and Peace), that I planted in memory of my parents, Tom and Irene. During our most recent Whitworth in Bloom entry, the Edgemoor community smallholding in Shawforth joined in and provided a very different perspective to our community gardens, including livestock and community vegetables.

An important aspect is that there is more convenient access to our local councillors in Whitworth. It is possible to meet with them and phone them about local matters. These are people who understand Whitworth and its residents' needs and views. As numbers are only slightly over the recommendation, dividing the Whitworth Valley community and redrawing Whitworth's two wards for electoral representation would not seem to be appropriate as Shawforth residents have always been important and integral to local heritage and the success of our community's identity, its social-wellbeing, civic pride and cultural progress as a township. Losing Shawforth could only result in a decline in community cohesion in Whitworth. I strongly feel that Whitworth should be reviewed as one ward with three councillors for these reasons.

