

Coventry

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See attachment.

Attached Documents:

- Conservative Coventry Boundaries Counterproposal .docx

2024 Coventry Electoral Review



Conservative Counterproposal

Introduction

In October 2022, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (hereafter referred to as 'the Boundary Commission') commenced an electoral review of Coventry City Council, the first since 2003. It is tasked with drawing new ward boundaries which satisfy its statutory criteria based on population projections for the city in 2029.

The Boundary Commission's statutory criteria are:

1. Delivering electoral equality for local electors.
2. Respecting the interests and identities of local communities.
3. Effective and convenient local government.

Following an initial stage of work, the Boundary Commission is recommending that Coventry City Council retain 18 wards, each electing three members. This has set the average number of electors in each ward in 2029 at 13,848. To achieve electoral equality, all 18 wards must sit with a +/-10% variance of this average.

On 31st October, the Boundary Commission published its draft recommendations for Coventry. While we welcome the Boundary Commission's acceptance of our proposals in the Holbrooks and Stoke areas of the city, we were disappointed that the opportunity to unite other communities in the city was not adopted.

We note the difficulty of satisfying all three of the Boundary Commission's criteria set out above. It is in these circumstances that we accept most of the draft recommendations.

However, we would like to propose a counterproposal which refines the draft recommendations to create a more optimal compromise between the Boundary Commission's criteria and respond to community opinion. This includes changes to the boundary between Henley and Wyken wards, changes to the boundary and name of Earlsdon and Cheylesmore wards, and to the boundary and name of Tile Hill & Canley and Wainbody wards.

This counterproposal takes each in turn.

Henley and Wyken

In its draft recommendations, the Boundary Commission dismissed the use of the Hinckley Road to form part of the boundary between Henley and Wyken wards, ensuring electoral equality in the north east of the city by including polling district Fa in Wyken. We argued this is evidenced by the school catchment area for Walsgrave Primary School which does not cross this boundary.

In its dismissal the Boundary Commission noted the representation that, *“the River Sowe is a stronger boundary in the area than the A4600.”* However, the Boundary Commission contradicts itself by saying that the Manor Farm Estate has more in common with Wyken, which is south of the River Sowe. It is not apparent why the Boundary Commission considers it acceptable to use the River Sowe in one area and not another.

Given the Boundary Commission’s preparedness to cross the River Sowe, we believe that transferring polling district Fa from Henley to Wyken is a more optimal move than transferring part of the Manor Farm Estate and New Green Park.

Firstly, the Manor Farm Estate contains both Henley Green Primary School and Henley Green Medical Centre, both used by people in the wider Henley community. Instead, in Wyken Croft which is immediately south of the River Sowe, people use services in Wyken, such as Wyken Croft Primary School, St John Fisher School and the The Forum Medical Centre. These services use the River Sowe as their boundary.

Secondly, there is only one vehicular access between Wyken Croft and the Manor Farm Estate/New Green Park estate. Whereas, the latter two estates are adjacent to Henley Road, which serves as the spine road for the entire Henley community. By retaining these estates in Henley ward, the Boundary Commission can maintain the community connections established in Henley.

We note in its full report that the Boundary Commission is seeking additional information from residents on this boundary. We hope in that spirit this counterproposal adds useful context, and that the Boundary Commission adjust its recommendations according to the views of local people.

Earlsdon and Cheylesmore

In order for the Boundary Commission to meet its criteria for electoral equality, we accept the principle of the boundaries it has drafted for Earlsdon ward. However, we have included three amendments in our counterproposal to better meet the other two criteria and maintain electoral equality.

Firstly, we propose renaming the ward 'Earlsdon and Stivichall'. By including polling districts DD, DF, DG and PA, local people will recognise that the entire Stivichall community has now been united within one ward. However, given the distinctions between Stivichall and Earlsdon that we made clear in our original submission, a name change will better reflect these two communities and maintain electoral equality.

Secondly, we propose adjusting the Cheylesmore-Earlsdon boundary to become clearer, by using Dillotford Avenue as a 'smooth' boundary, rather than the 'jagged' boundary caused by including Lupton Avenue, Brayford Avenue, Stamford Avenue and Salisbury Avenue in Earlsdon ward. To make the boundary clearer and satisfy the Boundary Commission's three criteria, we propose placing all properties on Dillotford Avenue between Daventry Road to The Chesils in Earlsdon ward and the even numbered properties on Dillotford Avenue between the The Chesils and Hele Road. This recognises the diversity of the housing stock on Dillotford Avenue, which has more in common with Stivichall on the western section, and more in common with Cheylesmore on its eastern section.

Thirdly, we note the Boundary Commission's request for more submissions on the Green Lane area (polling district DG) and whether the boundary should jump across the A45. We believe this area has stronger links with Earlsdon ward, given the catchment area for Styvechale Grange School and links to War Memorial Park. Instead, we think the Boundary Commission's logic should be applied to the Cannon Close estate to the west of Kenilworth Road. This is an isolated, car dependent cul-de-sac with no northward links into Earlsdon. We propose Cannon Close, Stareton Close and the adjacent properties on Fletchamstead Highway be moved into Wainbody ward, where the community has more links with Cannon Park.

Lastly, in the same vein as the previous point, on Cheylesmore's boundary with Binley and Willenhall ward, we propose using the River Sowe as the boundary between the West Coast Mainline and London Road. This will ensure that the new housing estate, which will be served by a vehicular junction on London Road, we will be isolated from the services it will use, primarily around the London Road roundabout area at ASDA, and the education facilities in the wider Whitley area.

Tile Hill & Canley and Wainbody

We note the Boundary Commission's use of the A45 as the new boundary between Bablake and Woodlands ward and its subsequent placement of the Woodlands and Tile Hill & Canley wards boundary along Bushberry Avenue in order to achieve electoral equality. However, we note that this will have the effect of dividing the Tile Hill community, which is bounded between Broad Lane and Tile Hill Lane. Therefore, we think it is inappropriate to change the name of Westwood ward to include explicit reference to Tile Hill, when the Boundary Commission's proposals in fact split that community.

Furthermore, Canley can be divided into three sub-communities, one of which is Canley Gardens, which is placed within Earlsdon ward. Because the Boundary Commission is unable to fully unite Tile Hill & Canley within its own ward due to their combined size, we argue the name should revert to Westwood, which is a pejorative term for this part of the city. This follows the precedent in neighbouring wards like Wainbody and Woodlands, which unite multiple communities under one common name.

In addition to the name change, we propose retaining polling district Qg (known as Westwood Heath) in Westwood ward. We believe it is inappropriate to include Westwood Heath and Finham in the same ward, as it creates a thin, linear ward which does not share common services. As an extreme example, the inclusion of Tile Hill station in the same Wainbody ward as Howe's Lane is not grounded in people's lived experience in the community.

In order to achieve electoral equality we recommend placing polling district QE and the eastern portion of polling district QF (using Mitchell Avenue as the new boundary) into Wainbody ward. We think Mitchell Avenue serves as an appropriate boundary because the housing stock in the remaining part of QF differs significantly to QE, evidencing the diverse Canley we note above. Additionally, those living on the western end of Charter Avenue share more services with Tile Hill, including through several vehicular and pedestrian crossings of the railway, whereas in QE, people look to Cannon Park for services, where there are no crossings into Tile Hill. Additionally, the large student population in QE uses the University of Warwick, which is also in Wainbody ward.

Conclusion

Taken together, we believe our counterproposal refines the Boundary Commission's draft recommendations, so that Coventry can achieve warding patterns which truly unite communities, delivery clear boundaries and achieve electoral equality.

We implore the Boundary Commission to fully assess this counterproposal and consider the weight of submissions accompanying it, which demonstrate it has the backing of local people who actually live in these communities.