

# Barnsley

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## Comment text:

**Related subject:** Whole Borough

I am generally supportive of the LGBCE recommendations for Barnsley although I have a few concerns. Please see the attached document for my comments on the proposals and my suggestions for their improvement.

## Attached Documents:

- barnsley-electoral-review-2024-response-to-lgbce-draft-recommendations-mc.docx

# **Electoral Review of Barnsley 2024**

## **Response to the Draft Recommendations published by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (May 2024)**

### **1. Introduction**

I am responding to the Draft Recommendations for new ward boundaries published by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) for Barnsley MBC. I do so following my previous submission which evidenced why the initial projected electorate was not fit for purpose, which meant I was unable to propose a valid warding pattern.

The comments and suggestions herewith are based on my previous experience of 16 years working for Barnsley MBC in Planning and Community Planning, and my 12 years as a resident of Barnsley until 2011. In my former local government roles, I was the lead officer involved in two electoral reviews overseen by the LGBCE.

### **2. Projected Electorate**

Further to my previous submission, I very much welcome the revised electorate figures for 2029 which address the concerns I raised about the likely level of new housing development and other factors. Whilst no projection can accurately predict what will happen by 2029, the new figure of 193,614 is realistic and provides credibility to the Draft Recommendations.

However, I note that polling district CE is still described as Billingley Parish which is in fact CF, as stated on the Council's website (Polling district and station review 2023). Polling district CE relates to the Low Valley area. I note also that the projected 2029 electorate data does not follow the LGBCE requirement that polling districts should contain an approximate number of whole electors rather than fractions of electors.

### **3. Overall Pattern of Wards**

I broadly welcome the LGBCE draft recommendations and the inventive way the Commission has sought to draw out the best features from each of the three warding submissions received. There was some merit in all the proposals and it is right to take them all into account. The draft proposals reflect a desire for continuity where possible and change where necessary. I also welcome the detailed justifications

provided by the LGBCE which was lacking in the Council's own submission. I therefore support most aspects of the draft recommendations and my suggested amendments are intended to be constructive contributions which I hope the LGBCE will take into account for its final recommendations.

#### **4. Comments on the Draft Recommendations for Wards**

##### **Athersley, Cudworth, Monk Bretton and Royston**

The draft recommendations include the village of Carlton in Monk Bretton which I acknowledge has close ties to Carlton. Including Carlton in Royston Ward would create a projected electorate larger than permitted. The proposed Royston Ward clearly corresponds to the identity of the Royston community.

I agree that the St Helen's Ward should be renamed and I would suggest Athersley and New Lodge, given that these are the communities covered. Whilst most of the housing in both communities was built after 1945, Athersley and New Lodge are both historic settlements shown on the Ordnance Survey map published in 1840. St. Helen's is the Church of England parish church for Athersley and I urge the LGBCE to adopt a more secular name. The name St Helen's can cause confusion due to St Helen's School and St Helen's Way being in Monk Bretton Ward and Ordnance Survey maps (e.g. Explorer sheet 278) also show St Helen's as being in Monk Bretton.

The proposed move of the Burton Road area from Cudworth to Monk Bretton makes sense to address community identity rather than retain the existing salient.

##### **Central Barnsley**

There are various possible options for dividing central Barnsley into wards and all have both advantages and disadvantages. The draft proposals have the advantage of continuity, being based on the three current wards, originally put forward by the Council and agreed by the LGBCE in 2003. Of the three, Central is perhaps the least satisfactory in that it includes part of Monk Bretton but the ward has existed since 1979 and residents have become used to it.

I am concerned that the proposed Kingstone Ward has a high variance of -10% which is only likely to increase beyond 2029 due to limited opportunities for new housing in the area. I therefore suggest that the LGBCE adds the eastern fringe of the Dodworth Ward to Kingstone given that the former benefits from a favourable variance of +5%.

I suggest splitting polling district HD to add Grosvenor Drive, Grosvenor Walk, Grosvenor Gardens, Branksome Avenue, Rosedale Gardens, May Terrace, Psalters Rise and St Hilda Avenue to Kingstone. I estimate that this area has 450 electors and is part of Barnsley town which was only added to Dodworth Ward in 2003 to

balance the electorate. This change would result in electorates of about 8,705 in Kingstone (variance -5.6%) and 9,263 in Dodworth (variance +0.5%).

### **Darton and Dodworth**

I am supportive of the draft recommendations for boundaries in this area apart from the boundary between Dodworth and Kingstone wards, as described earlier. As a former resident of Gawber, I suggest changing the name of Darton West to recognise the fact that only 35% of the electorate actually live in Darton (including Kexbrough). Almost two thirds of the electorate live in three polling districts in the south of the ward covering Barugh, Redbrook and Gawber. Residents living in the south of Darton West ward do not consider themselves as living in Darton and deserve recognition in the name of the ward.

The largest polling district in Darton West is EF (2,415 projected electors) which covers Redbrook, an area of largely modern housing which, along with Gawber, is clearly a suburb of Barnsley rather than being part of Darton. For this reason, I suggest the name of Darton West and Redbrook. The name Red Brook appears on the OS map published in 1840, referring to a farm on Redbrook Road. The use of the Darton name for the existing ward relates to the boundaries of the former Darton Urban District Council which was abolished in 1974.

I am puzzled by the references to part of Wilthorpe being in Darton West (para 67 of the report). Wilthorpe is a suburb of Barnsley town which is clearly in Old Town Ward (mainly polling district MD). The LGBCE should note the location of Wilthorpe Park, Wilthorpe Primary School, Wilthorpe Dry Cleaners and the former Wilthorpe Hotel, now Tesco Express which are all in Old Town ward. The area to the west, in Darton West ward, is Redbrook. Please note the location of Redbrook Business Park, Redbrook View and Redbrook Walk in Darton West Ward.

I support the proposed boundaries of Dodworth Ward except for the area east of Horizon Community College which I suggest should be transferred to Kingstone Ward to bolster its small electorate, see my section on Central Barnsley for details. The area around Dodworth Road is part of Barnsley town and not Dodworth.

### **North and East Barnsley**

I support the inclusion of all of Great Houghton parish in Darfield and Great Houghton Ward, which respects the strong community identity of Great Houghton as does the proposed name of the ward. I also support the move of the area around Station Road, Low Valley to Wombwell. Areas south of the River Dove, including Wombwell Town FC, are traditionally seen as part of Wombwell.

The resultant smaller North East Ward would cover the three communities of Grimethorpe, Shafton and Brierley. This is the same as the ward which existed before 2003, which was called Brierley after the former parish which was abolished in 2016. Through family links, I am very familiar with Grimethorpe whose residents

do not identify with the name North East, which simply describes the orientation of the ward within Barnsley Borough. Grimethorpe is not only the largest community in the ward with 3,938 electors but is also the best known for the Grimethorpe Colliery Band and as the setting for the 1996 film “Brassed Off”. The second largest community in the ward is Shafton (2,687 electors) which is also the only civil parish. People in the ward identify strongly with the communities they live in so I suggest that North East be re-named Grimethorpe and Shafton to reflect the two largest communities.

I support the proposed boundaries of the two Dearne wards and the re-naming of these wards to better reflect the three main communities. The northern ward should rightly be named Thurnscoe and Goldthorpe North and the southern ward Bolton and Goldthorpe South. Goldthorpe Green relates to a small part of Goldthorpe between Dearnside Leisure Centre and Dearne Cricket Club, and is the name of a medical centre. I feel that Highgate and other parts of south Goldthorpe such as the Barnburgh Lane area do not identify with Goldthorpe Green.

### **Hoyland, Stairfoot, Wombwell and Worsbrough**

I accept the proposed boundary of Hoyland Milton although I recognise that Wood Walk is part of Wombwell so its inclusion is unfortunate. I suggest changing the name of this ward to Hoyland and Elsecar to reflect the importance of Elsecar as the second largest community in the ward (polling district IF has 2,254 electors). The name Milton relates to the former Milton Ironworks located in south Hoyland (polling district IC: 1,260 electors), which closed in 1884 and the site is now Milton Park. Although Milton has relevance to parts of the ward, Elsecar has much stronger recognition across Barnsley Borough and beyond as a result of its famous Heritage Centre, steam railway, antiques centre, historic park and railway station.

The Barnsley Local Plan (2019) makes no mention of Milton in its Spatial Strategy which emphasises the importance of Elsecar to the Hoyland area as illustrated in the quotes below:

“The Elsecar Heritage Centre is an important tourism and cultural asset in this area that the Local Plan will safeguard and promote. The Plan will also protect those areas around the Heritage Centre that contribute to the wider understanding of the early coal and ironworking industries of this part of Barnsley.

Elsecar has been awarded 'Heritage Action Zone' status by Historic England, based on the significance of its heritage and the potential future economic impact of that heritage. The Heritage Action Zone will enable Elsecar to realise its immense potential by deepening understanding of its heritage, extending the visitor experience to key archaeological sites, for which conservation principles will be established, identifying appropriate potential future development and maximising commercial use of historic assets. The Heritage Action Zone is anticipated to be a major driver for future investment, grant funding and economic growth for Elsecar.”

I support the addition of Low Valley south of the River Dove to Wombwell Ward to enable a viable Darfield and Great Houghton Ward. Furthermore, this change would include more of the town of Wombwell into the ward, more than compensating for the loss of Wood Walk.

The most problematic proposal of the LGBCE is the division of Birdwell which is unfortunate but arguably required to achieve the best warding pattern. Birdwell is a mile long village which has historic links both north and south. Northern Birdwell is largely a C20th extension of the village along Worsbrough Road towards Worsbrough Village which is its nearest neighbour. North Birdwell is as close to Worsbrough Bridge as it is to Hoyland Common. There is a shared industrial history whereby miners from both Worsbrough and Birdwell worked at Barrow Colliery until it closed in 1985. Birdwell is in the parish of Worsbrough St Mary, one of three CoE parishes in Worsbrough. Birdwell Primary School was previously known as Worsbrough Birdwell Junior & Infants School. This reflects the fact that Birdwell was part of the Worsbrough Urban District pre 1974 and formed part of Worsbrough Ward prior to boundary changes in 1979.

The southern half of Birdwell includes the historic core of the village along Chapel Street and is more closely associated with Hoyland Common and Tankersley. Rockingham Colliery (closed 1979) lay between Birdwell and Hoyland Common, employing miners from both communities, so it makes sense for southern Birdwell to remain in Rockingham Ward. A division of Birdwell is regrettable but perhaps necessary given that no ward can have variance greater than 10%.

The minor change proposed for the boundary of Stairfoot Ward is supported.

### **Penistone and Rockingham**

I support the LGBCE proposals for the two Penistone wards, moving Gunthwaite and Ingbirchworth parish from Penistone West to Penistone East and ensuring that Penistone itself remains within Penistone West. The latter keeps the community together and avoids splitting existing parish wards on Penistone Town Council.

I support the proposal that all of Tankersley parish should be united within Rockingham Ward which is preferable to having it split in two as is currently the case. Tankersley clearly belongs with Rockingham due to its proximity to Hoyland Common and shared industrial history. Tankersley was dominated by Wharncliffe Silkstone Colliery located just south of Pilley, until it closed in 1967 and was demolished in 1972. The mine and community developed close links with nearby Rockingham Colliery at Hoyland Common which closed in 1979. These community ties remain strong which is why the Forge Community Partnership's Memorandum of Association (1998) states its objects as "to pursue any charitable purpose with the object of improving the quality of life for residents in the Hoyland, Hoyland Common, Elsecar, Pilley, Tankersley, Birdwell, Platts Common and Milton areas..".

Although Hoyland Common is the largest community in Rockingham Ward, I support the continued use of the Rockingham name to reflect the wider area including Tankersley parish and southern Birdwell.

I strongly support the continued inclusion of Silkstone parish within Penistone East Ward. This ward should retain its rural character and consist entirely of whole parishes.