

Sandwell

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Comment text:

Further to the ongoing consultation on the Commission's draft recommendations for Sandwell's new ward boundaries – due to conclude tomorrow 12 May – please see attached a representation pack comprising a letter and supporting maps.

The letter is a formal submission on behalf of Sandwell Council and is submitted on a cross-party basis electronic and digitally signed by Leaders and representatives of all political groups and independent member with their full endorsement.

Attached Documents:

- smbc-cross-party-submission---ward-pattern-consultation-response-11.05.2025-final.pdf

11 May 2025

Dear Commissioners,

**Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council submission –
LGBCE draft recommendations for new wards in Sandwell
Alternative proposals for Blackheath, Rowley, Cradley Heath, Old Hill, and
Langley areas**

Following the publication of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) draft recommendations for new wards in Sandwell as part of the ongoing boundary review of the local authority area. The Council has carefully and diligently considered the proposals through a cross-party working group.

Alongside the Senior Responsible Officer, a cross-party Working Group has played an integral role for the Council throughout the review process. The working group has acted an objective representative forum through which the views of Councillors across all wards and from all political spectrums including, representing all who live and work in Sandwell have been considered. The use of a cross-party Working Group model has been critical – this has ensured the democratically elected representatives of all residents and communities located within Sandwell have been given a voice and careful consideration.

Overall, the Council welcomes and endorses the draft recommendations made by the Commission for Sandwell and their alignment in large part with the detailed cross-party representation previously made by Council. However, additional representations are now made relating to Commission proposals relating to the southwest areas of Sandwell specifically within Rowley Regis town.

This submission sets out those representations. Alternative boundary proposals impacting the Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Old Hill, and Rowley communities of Sandwell are made following careful consideration and taking account of and prioritises the views of those who live, work and are resident within Sandwell. A minor adjustment is also proposed relating to Langley.

Critically, these proposals reflect a cross-party, consensus-based approach taking account of:

- Delivering electoral equality for local voters;
- Interests and identities of local communities; and
- Effective and convenient local government.

The cross-party Working Group in revisiting these areas has once again adopted an approach based on a sound methodology, taking account of historic and current community records, maps and key locations of interests, focussing on identifying –

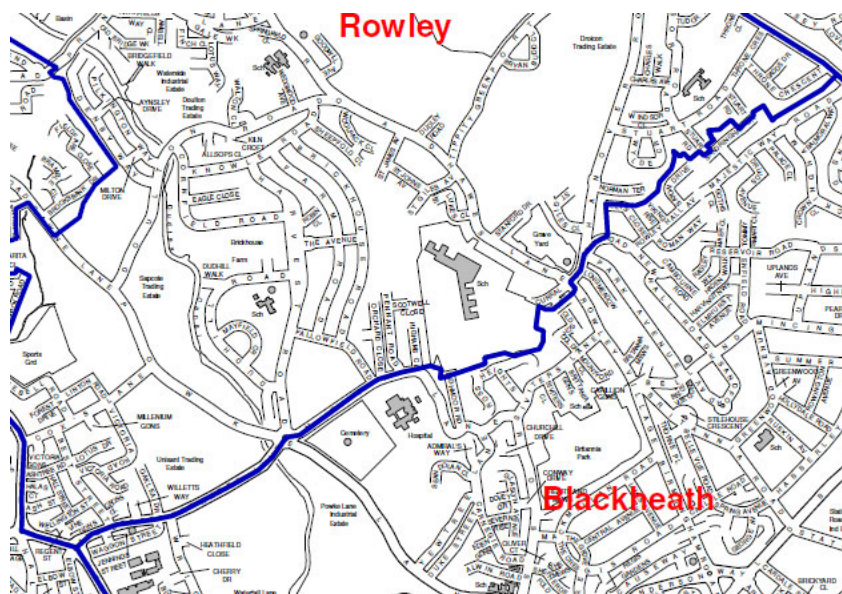
- community identities (current and historical);
- demography;
- physical infrastructure and landscape; and
- natural or manmade boundaries – principal highways, canals, railway lines, parks, and greenspaces.

Proposed Blackheath Ward and Rowley Ward

Turning firstly to the Blackheath and Rowley, appropriate natural and recognisable boundaries to define a new Blackheath Ward would be the main roads and current bus routes of Throne Road and the Oldbury Road. These act as a key route for pedestrians and vehicle traffic into the recognised Blackheath Town Centre.

Further connectivity through smaller pedestrian walkways and linkages to the Blackheath train station reinforces transport, community identity, retail and facilities all identified as part of a recognised, cohesive local community – Blackheath.

Taking the logic of this approach further and recognising the interests and identities of recognised local communities, an appropriate boundary between a newly defined Blackheath Ward and Rowley Ward would include Highgate Street from the traffic island incorporating Garrats Lane, maintaining Moor Lane as natural boundary. The benefits of this approach are to keep an established, connected and identifiable community intact. We consider this approach aligns areas that share community identities and interests, centred around key green spaces in this area.



There are natural boundaries between established and identifiable communities in Rowley and Blackheath which this submission uses to fully meet the requirements of the review criteria – use of principle road boundaries, identifiable landmarks, as well as a sensitive regard to not dividing roads between communities.

Turning to the requirement to ensure an equality of electorate between wards, careful consideration has been given to updated forecasting data used by the Commission.

The Council's updated proposals for Blackheath Ward and Rowley Ward would fully meet this requirement, as illustrated below –

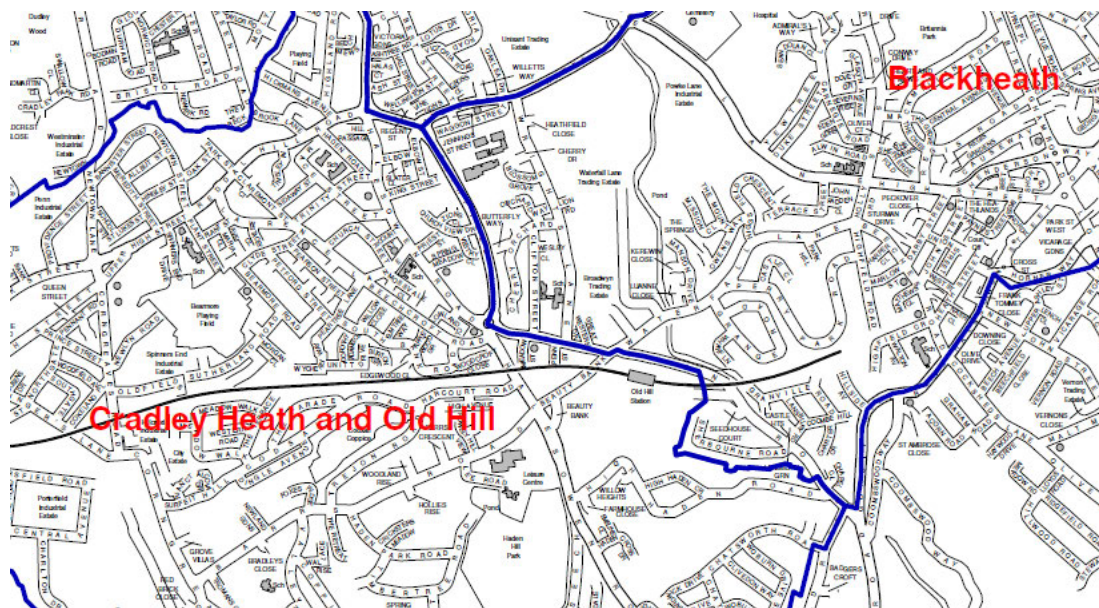
Ward	Households	Estimated Electorate 2023	Estimated Electorate 2030	Variation from Electorate Ward Average 2030
Blackheath	6,741	10,841	10,897	+8.6%
Rowley	5,777	9,703	9,848	-1.9%

Proposed Cradley Heath and Old Hill Ward

Whilst not a recognised town, these areas are recognisable as a distinct area with natural community, cultural and geographic integration to Old Hill. The Council considers that a more equitable and representative solution can be achieved that that proposed in the draft recommendations.

An address-based approach aligning properties and electorate was considered and dismissed as Post Office methods for address allocations – current and historic – was dismissed as were using recent parliamentary boundary changes as a guide: instead, identifiable and established community boundaries and identities are preferred.

The approach adopted by the cross-party Working Group has again been one of recognising the interests and identities of recognised local communities, taking account of objective data. The benefits of this approach are to keep an established, connected and identifiable community intact. We consider this approach aligns areas that share community identities and interests, centred around key green spaces in this area.



In proposing a combined Cradley Heath and Old Hill Ward, the Council through the cross-party Working Group has taken direct account of the size, location and identities of these key communities to ensure their unique identities are properly aligned and recognised.

Turning to the requirement to ensure an equality of electorate between ward, careful consideration has been given to updated forecasting data used by the Commission. The Council's updated proposals for Cradley Heath and Old Hill Ward would fully meet this requirement, as illustrated below –

Ward	Households	Estimated Electorate 2023	Estimated Electorate 2030	Variation from Electorate Ward Average 2030
Cradley Heath and Old Hill Ward	6,497	10,301	10,286	+2.5%

Proposed Langley Ward

Turning now to Langley Ward, the cross-party Working Group identified an opportunity to improve the representation and better reflect extant community identities.

Residents of Boundary Avenue identify far more closely with Blackheath than Langley. Boundary Avenue itself is part of the estate around Regis Heath Road, to which it is connected by walking paths, and not Harrold Road to the north, to which it has no access. To get from that estate to Boundary Avenue requires going around Penncricket Lane and the A4034.

Residents are much closer to the amenities of Blackheath High St, including Rowley Regis Station (0.4 miles) and Blackheath Sainsbury's supermarket (0.7 miles), than to those of Langley including Langley Green Station (1.9 miles) and the Langley Asda (1.3 miles).

In turn, this area is home to many young families, and the children of the Avenue largely attend Blackheath Primary School, rather than Causeway Green School in Langley. For these reasons minor changes to the boundary are proposed. The Council's updated proposals for Langley Ward would continue to fully meet review criteria, as illustrated below –

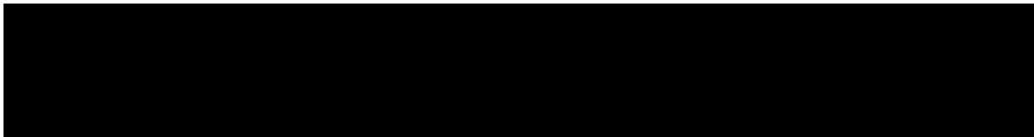
Ward	Households	Estimated Electorate 2023	Estimated Electorate 2030	Variation from Electorate Ward Average 2030
Langley	6,577	10,363	10,786	+7.5%

Conclusions

The cross-party Working Group on behalf of Sandwell Council consider that these proposals better reflect the historical areas of Cradley Heath and Old Hill, Blackheath and Rowley. These proposals crucially unify large areas of Cradley Heath and Old Hill by introducing clear, logical boundaries that fully meet the criteria under which reviews are governed by the Commission.

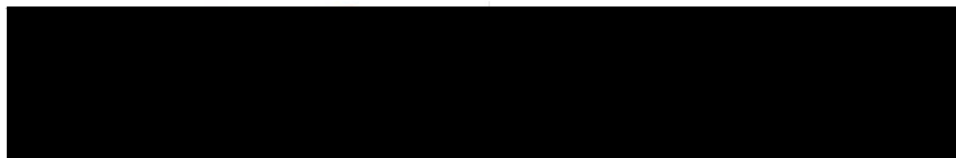
For and on behalf of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, we commend our proposals to the Commission.

Yours faithfully



Councillor Luke Davies
Chair – Cross Party Working Group,
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Councillor Kerrie Carmichael
Leader,
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council



Councillor William Gill,
Leader – Conservative Group,
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Councillor John Tipper
Green Party
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

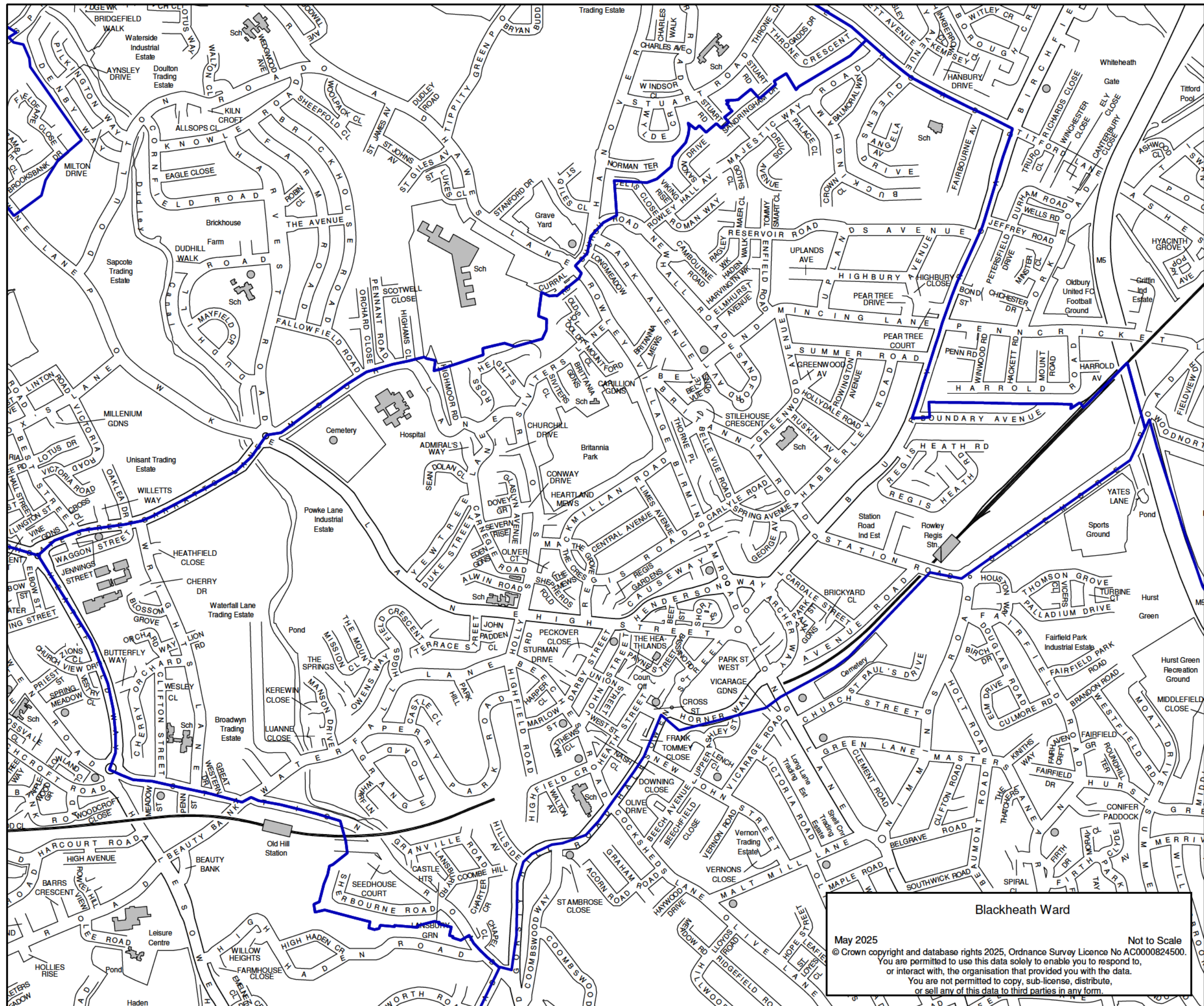


Councillor Richard Jeffcoat
Independent,
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Enclosures:

Proposed Ward boundary maps for:

1. Blackheath Ward
2. Cradley Heath and Old Hill Ward
3. Langley Ward
4. Rowley Ward

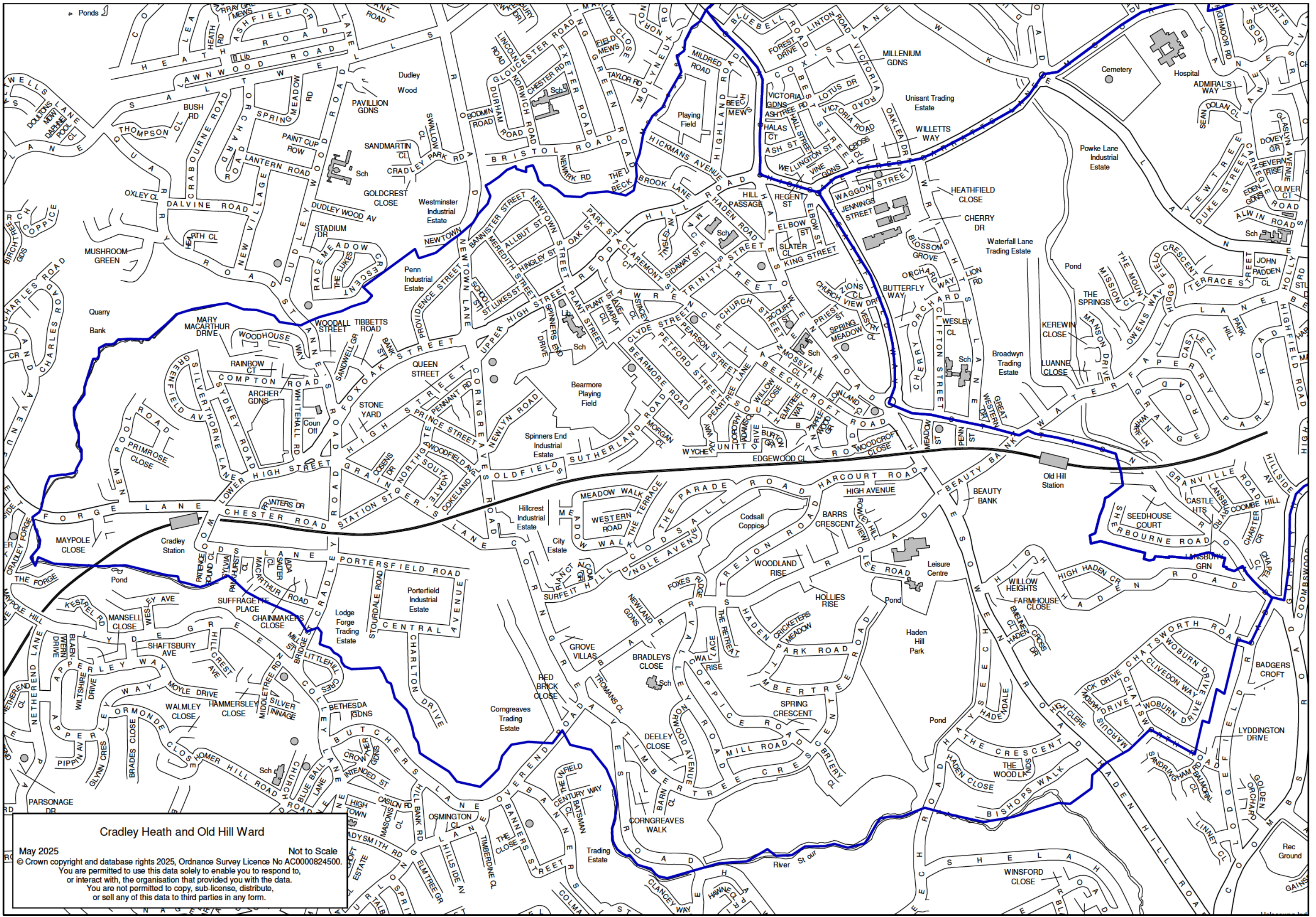


Blackheath Ward

May 2025

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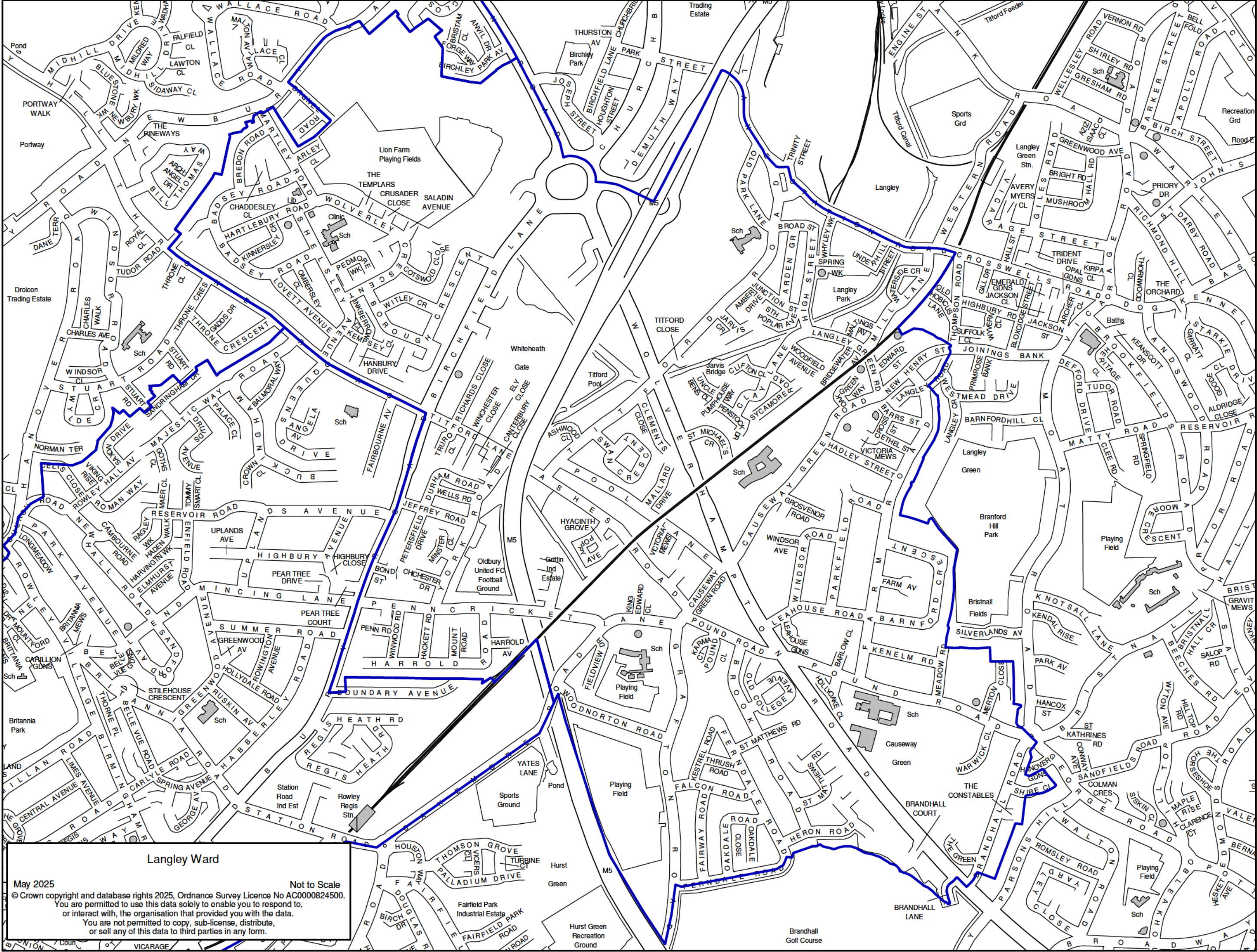
Cradley Heath and Old Hill Ward

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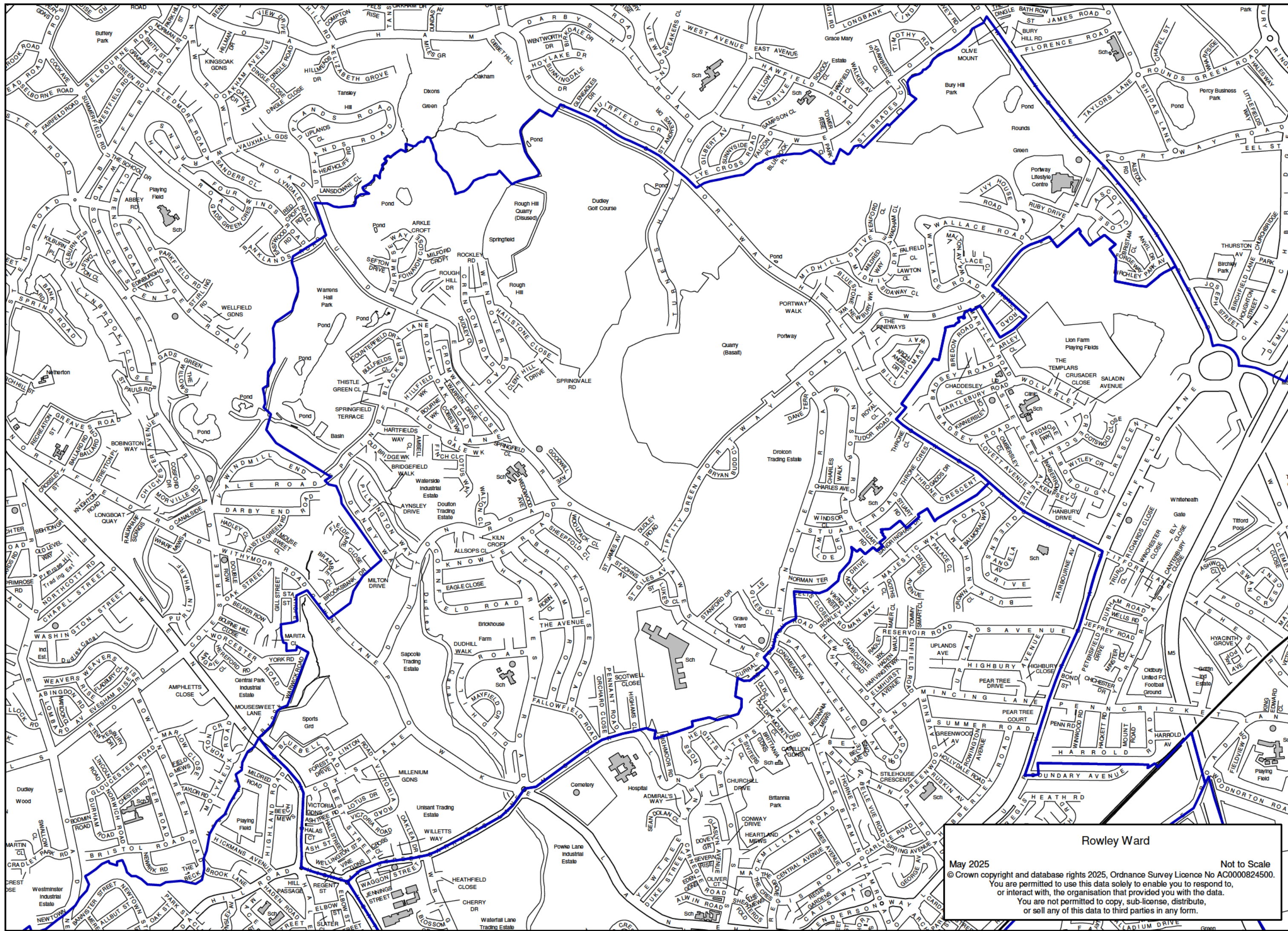
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Langleigh Ward

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Rowley Ward

May 2025

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