

Liverpool City Council

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Comment text:

The purpose of the attached proposal (LGBCE_Woolton_proposal_2021.pdf) is to retain the sense of belonging for the community of Woolton for the people who live there and retain the historical links that have dated back as far as 616AD when the area was referred to as "Wulfa" and "tun". Subsequently, Woolton was absorbed into the city of Liverpool from Lancashire in 1914. The area has hosted many notable figures such as John Lennon and Jodie Comer as well as well known sites linked to The Beatles such as Strawberry Field. In the 2019 film Yesterday many historical and community sites, identified in our proposed boundaries, were referred to as Woolton. The proposal reflects the wishes of Liverpool Council to reduce the number of its councillors in light of the Best Value Inspection Report and Section 57 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and argues the case for a two-councillor standalone ward that represent the vast interests of a large and interlinked community. Whether it be the historic parks of Woolton Woods, Reynolds Park and Blackwood, or the feeder interaction between Much Woolton Primary School and St Julies Secondary School and St Francis Xavier College, every part of this community is interlinked. The area also prides itself with its own preservation society – the Woolton Society, to educate local people and maintain historic links. Issues that affect Woolton Village, such as parking or licensing issues, will be as significant to those living in the immediate vicinity to those as far as Gateacre Park Drive. A smaller, single councillor approach would lead to unnecessary duplication of representation whereas a larger two councillor area would provide more effective governance and a closer relationship between Woolton's private citizens and its public representatives. The proposal accepts the need for electoral equality across the city of Liverpool and suggests a new ward with an estimated electoral size of 8,517, around double the size of Liverpool Council's suggested 4,200(est) single member wards. Councillors Kris Brown, Malcolm Kelly and Barbara Mace are Liberal Democrat councillors for the Woolton Ward. Kris Brown has represented the current ward structure since 2018. Malcolm Kelly has represented the current ward structure and its predecessors since 1996. Barbara Mace has represented the current ward structure and its predecessors since 1995. A full proposal is in the attached document.

Uploaded Documents:

[Download \(https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1639510894_LGBCE_Woolton_proposal_2021.pdf\)](https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1639510894_LGBCE_Woolton_proposal_2021.pdf)

A new, two-councillor, Woolton Ward

Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England



Hundreds of Wooltonians enjoying the 2021 Christmas tree light switch-on and celebrations

Councillor Kris Brown

Councillor Malcolm Kelly

Councillor Barbara Mace

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Introduction

The purpose of this proposal is to retain the sense of belonging for the community of Woolton for the people who live there and retain the historical links that have dated back as far as 616AD when the area was referred to as “Wulfa” and “tun”. Subsequently, Woolton was absorbed into the city of Liverpool from Lancashire in 1914. The area has hosted many notable figures such as John Lennon and Jodie Comer as well as well known sites linked to The Beatles such as Strawberry Field. In the 2019 film *Yesterday* many historical and community sites, identified in our proposed boundaries, were referred to as Woolton.

The proposal reflects the wishes of Liverpool Council to reduce the number of its councillors in light of the Best Value Inspection Report and Section 57 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and argues the case for a two-councillor standalone ward that represent the vast interests of a large and interlinked community.

Whether it be the historic parks of Woolton Woods, Reynolds Park and Blackwood, or the feeder interaction between Much Woolton Primary School and St Julies Secondary School and St Francis Xavier College, every part of this community is interlinked. The area also prides itself with its own preservation society – the Woolton Society, to educate local people and maintain historic links.

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Pic: A floral display on Kings Drive, Woolton, celebrating the Queen's Coronation anniversary in 2013. Woolton in Bloom is an award-winning volunteer led charity founded and run by people from across the Woolton area.

Places of significance and sense of community

Where is Woolton Village?

The centre of Woolton Village is mostly associated with the shopping district that lies along Allerton Road and the section of Woolton Street that lies north of High Street. However, on the southerly section of Woolton Street (across the junction of High Street) lies the Woolton Village Cross, which is considered by others as being the centre of Woolton Village. Regardless of these individually held views, we have seen proposals for the new ward boundaries completely separate both of these significant and identifiable places into two separate wards with the Village shopping area being placed in one ward and the Village Cross being placed in the adjoining ward.

This presents the first and obvious dilemma – which ward will be called Woolton Ward?

Will it be the ward where the Woolton shopping district lies, or will it be the ward in which the Woolton Village Cross is placed? The fact of the matter is that both of these locations are very much considered as being Woolton Village or the district of Woolton and should be as one, within a newly formed Woolton Ward.

It would not be so simple as to call one ward Woolton North-West Ward and the other Woolton South-East Ward (which would be the true map bearings), because from the proposals that we have seen, the vast majority of the area covering the latter ward takes in the Hunts Cross area of Liverpool, which is some considerable distance away from Woolton Village and is separated by Woolton Golf Course. The residents of Hunts Cross have never considered themselves to be part of the community of Woolton or indeed Woolton Village, in the same way that residents living in the Woolton end of the current Allerton & Hunts Cross ward have never considered themselves to be associated in any way with the Allerton or Hunts Cross districts of Liverpool.

What significant places make up the community of Woolton?

Woolton is very much blessed with strong educational and religious establishments of differing denominations, all within close proximity of each other and each of which are very well supported by the local community and are supportive of each other.

The three churches, all located within yards of each other, are St James' Church (Methodist), St Mary's Church (Catholic), and St Peter's Church (Church of England). All three Churches not only serve local residents who live within the immediate area of them, but serve residents from further afield within the area of our proposed boundary, who together make of the Church family of Woolton.

This is also reflected throughout the educational establishments. Within the central part of our proposed ward there are three oversubscribed infant and primary schools – Bishop Martin (Church of England) Primary School, Woolton Infant and Primary School, and Much Woolton Catholic Primary School, which is a feeder school into the two large and over-subscribed Catholic secondary schools of St Julie's Catholic High School for girls, which sits at the southerly point of our proposed ward, and SFX Catholic College for boys, which sits at the most northerly point of our proposed ward. There is also Woolton High Secondary School for learners with social, emotional and mental health needs, which also sits at the northerly point of our proposed ward boundary, adjacent to SFX College.

It is most significant that every single young person who attends either of these infant, primary and secondary schools, and their parents, very much consider themselves as attending Woolton schools. Every single young person, and their parents, who live immediately around, and within the area between the two Catholic secondary school locations, as defined on our proposed ward boundary, consider themselves to live within Woolton.

Put all of this together, and there are very strong links across the board between local people, local schools and the local churches, creating the strong foundation for a community based Woolton Ward.

These links are supported further within the community by numerous voluntary organisations, which either operate independently from each other or interlink with each other. For instance, for over 20 years a local voluntary organisation called 'Woolton in Bloom' has operated in Woolton and relies upon volunteers to come together from all over our proposed ward boundary to create magnificent floral displays throughout Woolton Village for entry into regional and national 'In Bloom' competitions. They hold their monthly meetings at the local Woolton Youth and Community Centre, which is located on Woolton Woods and Camp Hill park land that is also within the current Woolton Ward. However, other boundary proposals that we have seen show Woolton Woods and the Woolton Youth and Community Centre within, being severed from the current Woolton Ward. 'Woolton in Bloom' and their efforts to create a beautiful looking village each year is also very much supported by the local history and conservation group 'The Woolton Society' and the local 'Woolton Village Residents Association'.

In the early 1700's Woolton Hall was built and is now a Grade1 listed building. Its location is south of the Woolton Village Cross immediately adjacent to St Julie's Catholic High School and has always been held by the people of Woolton as a significant building of historical importance to the area of Woolton. Woolton Hall eventually came into the ownership of the Sisters of Notre Dame, but in 1972 they proposed to demolish Woolton Hall in order to build a new convent. It was at this time that 'The Woolton Society' was formed in order to oppose those plans and subsequently operate to preserve Woolton and its history. It is therefore ironic that the very building that helped form 'The Woolton Society' is proposed to also be severed from a ward that this organisation and its members will continue to operate. Who would the organisation turn to for continued political support in respect of this building, the councillors who represent the ward in which the organisation operates, or the councillors who represent the ward in which the building lies?

Woolton has much green open space, which is interlinked through history. There is Reynolds Park, the former home of local businessman and First World War hero Col. Sir James Reynolds, DSO,

Reynolds was born in Woolton and was a senior partner in the firm of Reynolds & Gibson, cotton brokers, of Liverpool. On 4 March 1914, he was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire, commissioned into the 1/3rd West Lancashire Brigade, Royal Field Artillery (Territorial Force), he commanded it in the First World War and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) in 1917.

He was elected at the 1929 general election as Member of Parliament for Liverpool Exchange, following the retirement of the Conservative MP Sir Leslie Scott. He was re-elected in 1931, and died in office in 1932, aged 67.

Reynolds was knighted in the 1920 New Year Honours and created a Baronet, of Woolton in the County of Lancaster, on 6 March 1923. He was appointed High Sheriff of Lancashire for 1927.

We mention this because, whilst fighting in the First World War Sir James Reynolds gifted to the people of Woolton land at Woolton Woods that he wanted to be used for recreational purposes by local people and for it to be in memory of all the from Woolton who lost their lives during the War.

Again, we have seen proposals to place Woolton Woods and Camp Hill in a different ward to that of Reynolds Park, both of which are clearly interlinked through Sir James Reynolds himself.

The Beatles are very much known world-wide for their connection not only to Liverpool, but also Woolton, features on the lips of many fans throughout the world. In fact thousands of Beatles fans make their way to Woolton to visit the many places associated with the Beatles, all of which are very much considered to be part of the community of Woolton.

Where are these places?

We have 'Mendips' on Menlove Avenue, the childhood home of John Lennon, St Peter's Church where Paul McCartney first met John Lennon at the Summer Fair performing as part of the local band 'The Quarrymen' and where you can find the grave of Eleanor Rigby, later immortalised in The Beatles song – Eleanor Rigby's former home is in nearby Vale Road. Strawberry Fields where John Lennon often visited through the woods that led from the back of his childhood home can also be found on Beaconsfield Road – another place immortalised in The Beatles song.

All of these places are significant and very much associated with the community of Woolton.

What gives people the sense of belonging to the community of Woolton?

People place themselves within what they consider to be one community or another, and this is no different for Woolton, although it could be argued that quite uniquely Woolton has much more to offer in terms of being a community than most other places throughout Liverpool.

Some of this has already been referred to above, but the list can go on with reference to the nightly youth club held at Woolton Youth & Community Centre, local Scout and Guide Groups, 'Woolton Community Life', which is a voluntary group set up by members of the Woolton Community to support Woolton residents who are on their own and isolated, two local doctor surgeries, the local cinema in the form of Woolton Picture House, Woolton Women's Institute, a thriving night time economy within the shopping district, Christmas festivities with the annual Christmas light switch-on, monthly farmers markets, and much more.

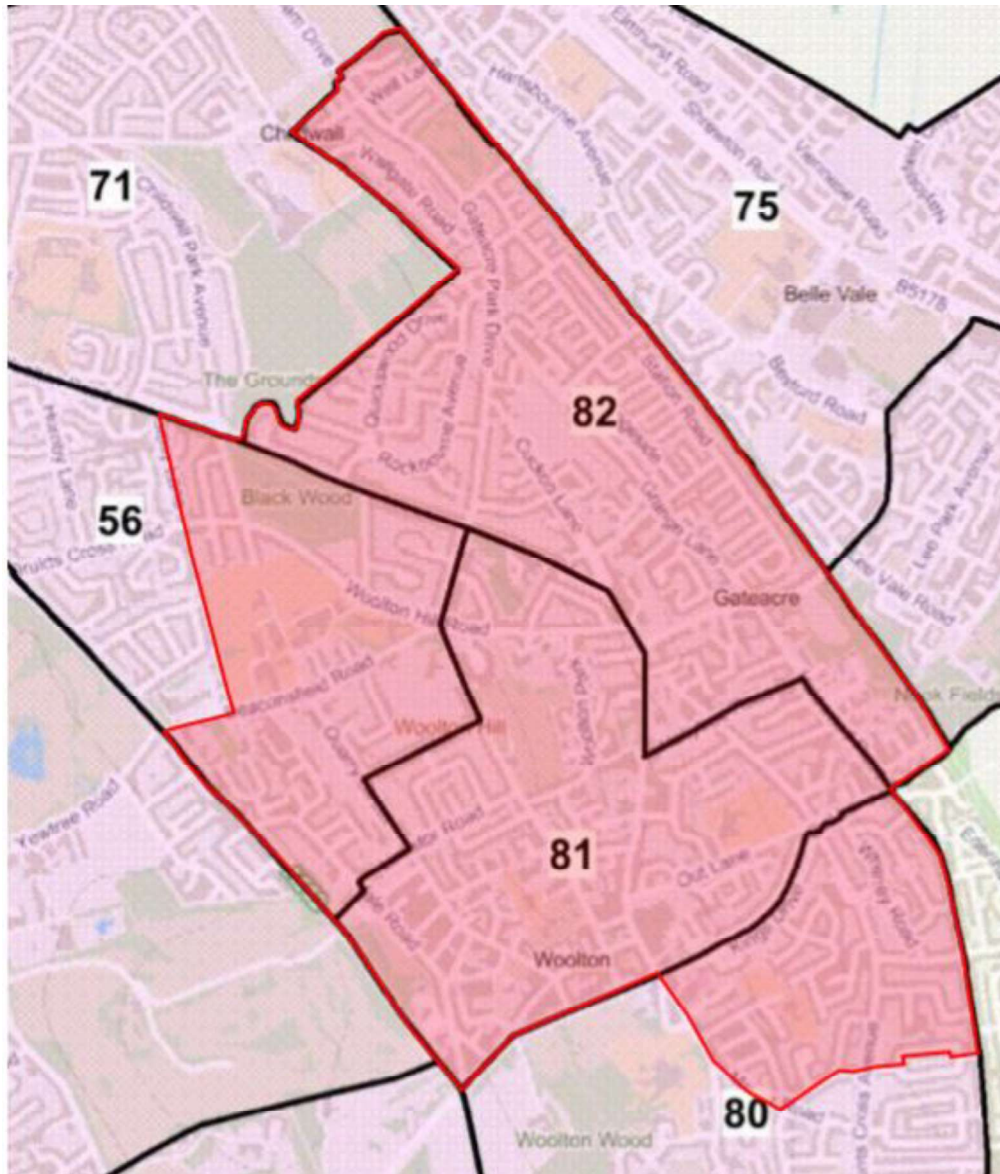
People within our proposed ward boundary feel a sense of belonging to Woolton through one or more of these organisations or places of interest that has been written about in this submission, and we feel that the boundary that we have proposed truly represents the area of Woolton and should be the bases for the formation of a new Woolton Ward.

Places of significant interest – a visual representation

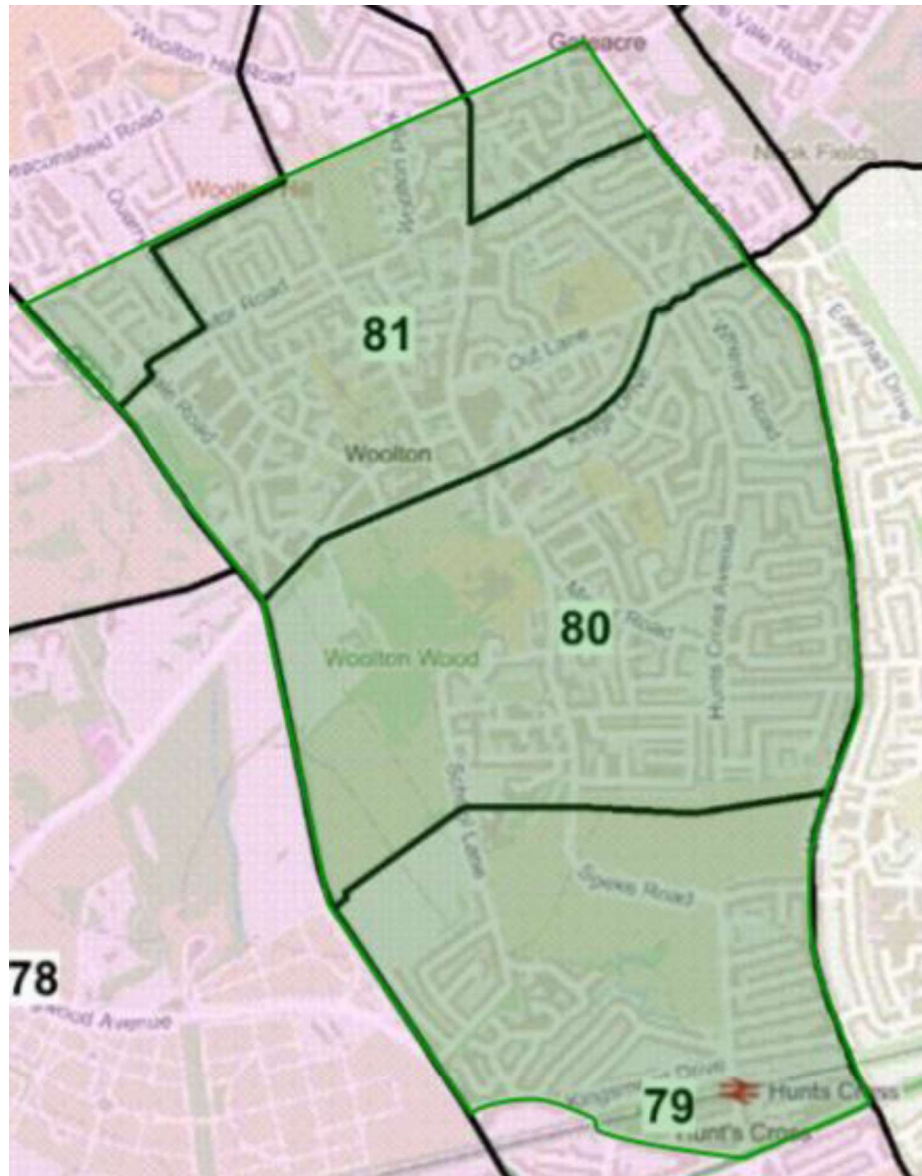


Previous ward boundaries

Woolton Ward Boundary – Prior to 2000 boundary change



Boundary of Much Woolton ©1658



Proposed new Ward boundary

The proposed new standalone Woolton Ward is a continuation of the current polling districts WOA, WOC, WOD with parts of WOB and AHE (Allerton and Hunts Cross ward).

The electorate for the proposed boundary is estimated at 8,517 based on the Electoral Register as of 13th December 2021.

The new ward uses clear geographical boundaries such as Woolton Road, Hunts Cross Avenue and Menlove Avenue to separate it clearly from other areas. The proposed ward boundary is 9.04km.

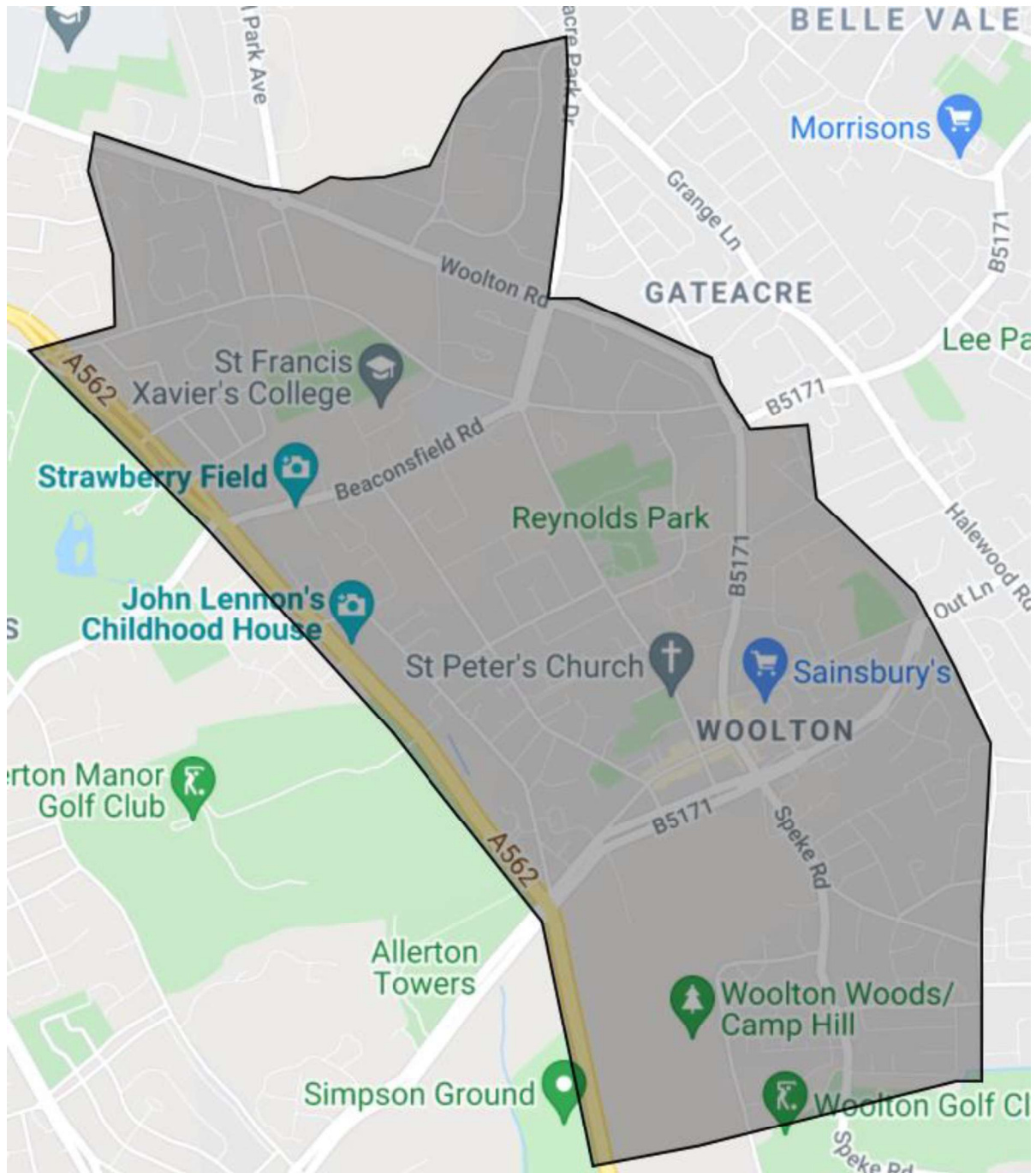
The proposal removes the community of Gateacre and large parts of the WOB polling district. However, it is notable that Gateacre has remained part of all predecessor boundaries of the Woolton Ward and formed a significant part of the historic 'Little Woolton' community.

Electoral Equality

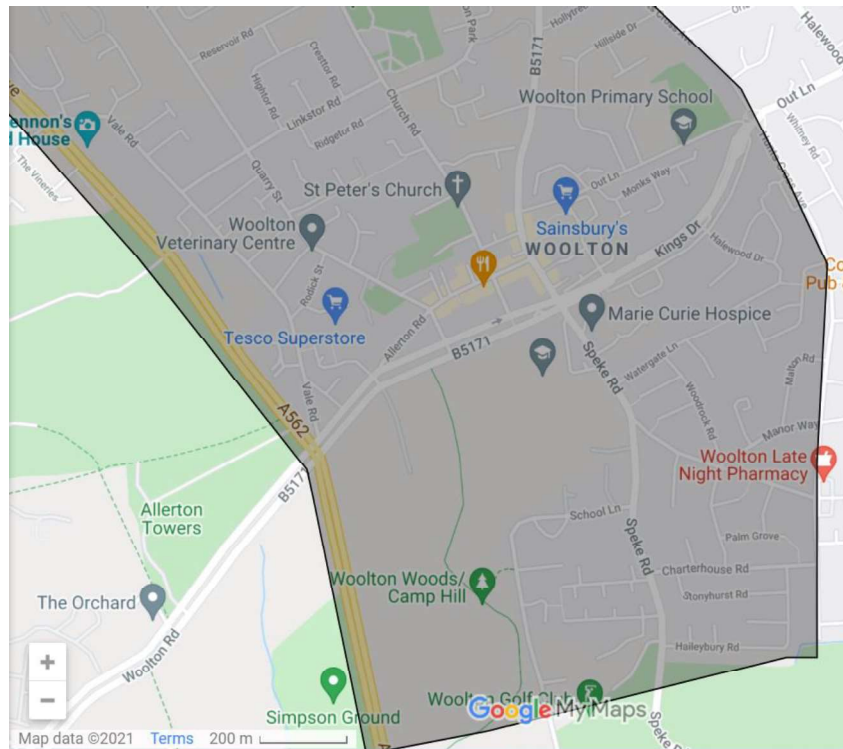
The 8,517 elector figure is roughly double that of the estimated 4,200 electorate needed for a single member ward, based on Liverpool Council's proposals which were submitted separately to the Commission.

It is predicted, based on Liverpool Council's own projections, that the electorate will decrease by 2027 with no significant housing developments proposed for the area.

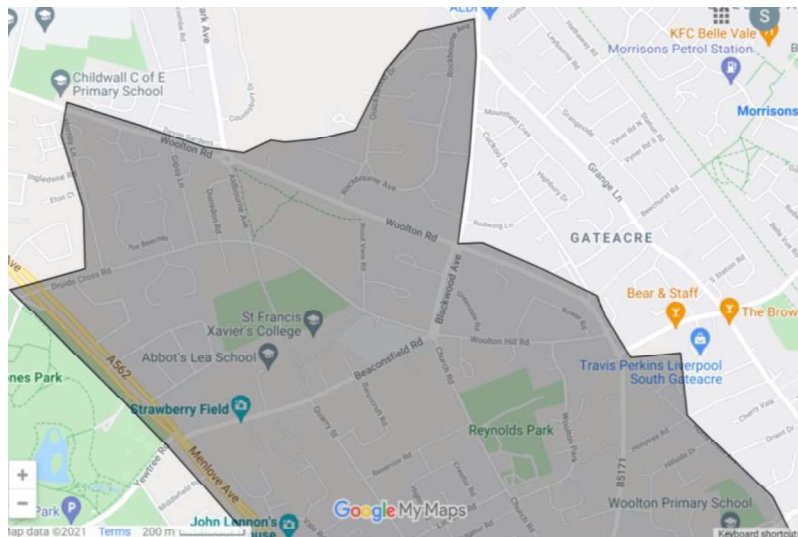
MAP 1 – New Woolton Ward (full)



MAP 2 – New Woolton Ward (Zoomed South)



MAP 3 – New Woolton Ward (Zoomed North)



Contacts

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Councillor Barbara Mace

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Yesterday. 2019. [film] Directed by D. Boyle. United Kingdom: Universal Pictures.