

Derby City Council

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Comment text:

Please find attached report I have compiled for the Labour Group Submission on the Boundary Commission's Review of Wards here in derby. I will also email this through.

Uploaded Documents:

https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1648479374_Labour+Group+-+Boundary+Review+Warding+Pattern+Consultation+Submission.docx

Local Government Boundary Review – warding pattern submission

Purpose

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) initiated a review of the City's electoral ward boundaries in Summer 2021. This will require all-out elections, and as a result led to the Labour motion for all-out elections passing at Full Council in December 2021.
- 1.2 Following the decision to keep the number of Councillors overall at 51, the Labour Group consulted far and wide to determine two things:
 - Should the Boundary Commission introduce one and two member wards
 - Do the current boundaries reflect existing and changing communities across Derby?
- 1.3 The Labour group kept the below criteria in mind for its submission in this report. These are the required criteria by the Boundary Commission and are the only criteria relevant. Vote shares, likely electoral outcomes or existing boundaries at either the local or parliamentary level are not directly relevant.
 - Delivering electoral equality for local voters
 - Protecting the interests and identities of local communities; and
 - Ensuring effective and convenient local government
- 1.4 Labour Councillors, candidates, members and affiliated organisations have been engaging with residents, community groups and leaders since the beginning of the process. This includes multiple meetings of residents across the City, and discussions with key stakeholders across Derby.
- 1.5 The Council passed a suggested submission that did not make many changes to the existing boundaries and which was not consulted on by the general public. No formal recommendations were created by any other party group than Labour, and the general public were not invited to comment on the Council submission before it was voted on.
- 1.6 The Labour Party released its plan for comment to the public.¹ This was featured in the Derby Telegraph, on Derbyshire Live and on Derby News local media.² Many comments were supportive and residents views about new areas gaining representation should be taken into account by the Boundary Commission. A selection of these have been collated at the end of this paper.

¹ <https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/back-local-communities-derby>

² <https://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/news/local-news/massive-row-brewing-labour-wants-6701464>

- 1.7 Following the consultation, the Labour Plan recognised eight areas that could gain better representation by introducing several two member wards. In order to verify that this is a viable proposal based on the electoral equality criteria, the Council drew up one proposal of how this could work in practice. The Council can make that proposal available on request, but is just one iteration of where the specific boundary lines could be.

Recommendations

- 2.1 To explore the benefit of having two member wards in addition to three member wards, where community boundaries, electoral numbers and geographic borders prove them to be beneficial
- 2.2 To reunite areas that are currently split under current ward lines, and retire ward names that are not understood or accepted by local communities since the last Boundary Review, namely “Blagreaves” and “Derwent”.
- 2.3 To recommend that the Local Election Boundary Review does not take into account the parliamentary boundaries (as already detailed by the Boundary Commission), but where possible and advisable, the parliamentary boundaries are adjusted to reflect the new local government wards.

Recommendation One Rationale:

- 3.1 Derby currently has three member wards as a function of electing in thirds for the last few decades. Due to the move to all-outs, there is an opportunity presented at this point in the electoral cycle to move to two and three Councillor wards, and it is the right time to introduce this change. Doing so allows the Boundary Commission to ensure that wards are well within tolerance, and better reflect existing, new and emerging communities.
- 3.2 Electoral numbers are easier to balance by introducing two member wards. The north-east of the City, which is predominantly white, middle class and affluent, has enough residents for eleven Councillors. Spondon specifically is extremely close to the extreme of tolerance for voters by 2027. It would be hard to argue why this area should continue having twelve Councillors when other areas of the City, notably the more working class, poorer and diverse communities, are under-represented. Under a rigid three-Councillor pattern, it would be difficult to put enough residents in this area for 12 Councillors, but mixing two and three Councillor wards leads to the right number of eleven being possible. This is mirrored across the City, with areas becoming more easily brought into tolerance by adjusting the number of Councillors to reflect local populations.
- 3.3 Community and geographic boundaries are easier to respect when dealing with smaller wards. For instance, the A38 boundary between Mackworth Estate and the New Zealand neighbourhood is not currently respected, but could be with two member wards. This is similarly the case in Normanton with the A5111 ring-road, and Alvaston is split by Raynesway. Currently, to balance the North East’s need for extra residents, Derwent or Chaddesden Wards would have to cross major roads or rivers to secure sufficient voters.

Recommendation Two Rationale:

- 4.1 With two member wards, the overall number of wards increases, which means that more areas get the name recognition, and funding that comes with ward status, that they deserve. Areas across the City are either currently tied together, or split apart, in order to get 17 wards with the requisite number of residents, and this can change with two member wards. Notably:
- Derwent was created to take in most of Breadsall Hilltop and half of Chaddesden. Residents to this day do not identify with the name “Derwent” and either believe they live in Chaddesden or Breadsall Hilltop.
 - Mackworth (a working class, ex-Council estate on the edge of Derby) is joined to New Zealand, a very City Centre, student-friendly, and diverse area. These communities are very different, and split by the major A38 road, and would be better off with their own dedicated representation.
 - Alvaston is a very large ward that stretches from the eastern edge of Derby to the City Centre, combining many areas that are not in Alvaston Village.
 - Sinfyn and Osmanton are combined, despite the geographic boundaries that exist between the two.
 - Heatherton Village is encompassed in the Littleover suburb, while half of Littleover is in “Blagreaves” ward. Most residents of Blagreaves ward either feel like they are Littleover residents or residents in Sunny Hill.
- 4.2 Some wards are suited to three members however, given their relative geographic isolation or population density. For instance, Darley, Mickleover, Allestree and Normanton are all well formed geographic entities that can sustain the right level of population for three members. Labour is recommending a hybrid approach that tailors the number of Councillors to the area’s need, rather than a strict, unbending rule that does not take into account the local voter’s benefit.
- 4.3 However, Labour is not recommending one member wards. Very few areas in the City are small enough to support just one Councillor, so neighbourhoods would have to be split. Also, Labour believes that Councillors should at least have one partner with which to share responsibility, and that isolating Councillors in one member wards would deter candidates from more diverse backgrounds from standing. However, the Commission should consider a one member ward, in extremis, where absolutely necessary to give more communities a say, and no alternative exists.

Recommendation Three Rationale:

- 5.1 The Boundary Commission has already stated that it will not take existing local or parliamentary election boundaries into account when drafting new lines, and Labour supports this position. Existing parliamentary boundaries do not take into account existing growth in areas like the City Centre, estates attached to Mickleover, Derwent, Boulton or Sinfyn and trying to cram these new voters into existing ward structures is not reflective of natural communities.

- 5.2 Based on the data the Council presented to members in February, the three parliamentary constituencies should have the following number of councillors within them, based on the electorate they are projected to have in 2027

Constituency	Number of Electors (2027)	Est. number of Councillors
Derby North	77,776	20.779
Derby South	81,395	21.746
Mid-Derbyshire within the City Boundaries.	31,734	8.478

- 5.3 Currently, Derby North and South contain 21 Councillors each, and Mid Derbyshire holds nine. Based on these projections, the only way to reasonably balance the electors across the City is to have wards that cross parliamentary boundaries. Sticking to three Councillor wards and limiting the boundaries by the parliamentary boundaries would see Mid-Derbyshire and Derby North have too many Councillors, and Derby South to have too few. This would by default mean the richer and more affluent areas of the City are over-represented.
- 5.3 The City Council included in their recommendation a request that the Boundary Commission does not cross parliamentary constituencies, even though their plan does that in two areas. Their claim of voter confusion and ease of election administration is unconvincing, given that the move to all-out elections every four years means that it is unlikely that there will often be a local election that coincides a national one. Local Elections in 2023 and 2027 would miss General Elections in 2024 and 2029, and even in the event of a May 2023 snap election, the difference in term length (four and five respectively) means that this would be unlikely to be repeated.
- 5.4 Furthermore, there is the opportunity to make any sensible adjustments to the parliamentary boundaries to mirror the new ward boundaries as part of the parliamentary review, and where necessary the Boundary Commission should examine the option to adjust lines where required.
- 5.5 Crossing parliamentary boundaries also allows Normanton to be reunited, as it is currently split, with part of Abbey ward containing the Normanton suburb, and it also allows the City Centre to be moved into a number of wards. The City Centre contains a larger than average number of developments, and carries a high casework burden, so sharing this among three or four wards creates a better local democratic service to residents and voters. The Cathedral Quarter could be connected to the south of Darley Ward, with which it has a strong affinity, and the rest of Friar Gate could be added to a newly formed New Zealand ward.

Supporting information

Key considerations by area

- 6.1 To develop the plan, the Council Officers divided the City into four quarters. Labour's recommendation by ward is listed below, with the number of Councillors the voter totals support. Proposed new areas that could gain wards have been added, as has

the number of Councillors the Council's analysis of the data indicates is appropriate. Where Labour concurs with the Council's proposal has been noted. Please also note that the names for new wards below are not final, and could be refined based on community feedback.

North-East

- 6.2 **Allestree** – limited change as this is a well-defined area, in agreement with the Council's proposal. **Three Councillors.**
- 6.3 **Darley** – Darley is a well-defined community at present, and simply moving the boundary South to incorporate part of the City Centre (the Cathedral Quarter) is enough to keep this ward at three Councillors. Initially, the Council proposed moving the other half of Ashbourne Road into Mackworth, but this was rejected due to the shared amenities of the park and surrounding area supporting that being kept in Darley. Similarly, Chester Green shares parks and schools with the rest of Darley, and is significantly split from the Chaddesden and Breadsall Hilltop areas of Derwent Ward. **Three Councillors.**
- 6.4 **Mackworth** – The recommendation by the Council to include the open space east of Station Road is sensible.

Labour proposes to split Mackworth from New Zealand, given the significant barrier the A38 creates in this ward. Mackworth is a name that only applies to the Estate on the edge of Derby, and referencing areas close to the centre of the City as Mackworth is not acceptable to or understood by local residents.

Labour also supports keeping the new housing within Mickleover given the community ties there, but accepts it may have to be moved into Mackworth to provide the proper number of voters for a two Councillor ward. These areas are linked by Station Road and Radbourne Lane. Combining the new housing in Mickleover with the New Zealand element of the current Mackworth is nonsensical, so would require a split in the ward to be supportable. **Two Councillors.**

- 6.5 **New Zealand *NEW WARD*** - New Zealand is an area of the City many residents believe they live in, and is a cohesive area containing a diverse mix of working families, students and other residents. A New Zealand ward would take on small parts of Abbey ward allocated to Mackworth in the Council plan, along Slack Lane and potentially more of the Friar Gate part of City Centre to reunite this thriving area of night life and leisure. **Two Councillors.**
- 6.6 **Mickleover** – Labour broadly supports keeping Mickleover as it stands, though some areas close to Littleover may have to be moved into Littleover to keep it within tolerance. These areas are demographically similar and share lots of local amenities so would mix well. **Three Councillors.**

North-West

- 6.7 **Derwent** – Derwent is a creation from the last boundary review and does not reflect local identity. Residents do not associate themselves with the term “Derwent” at all,

and instead believe they live in Breadsall Hilltop, or Chaddesden. This ward should no longer be used.

- 6.8 **Breadsall Hilltop *NEW WARD*** - This used to be a ward before the creation of Oakwood forced it into Derwent. This is a large ward with one and a half communities pushed together. Parts of Oakwood ward are not part of Oakwood at all, and instead link to Breadsall Hilltop or Chaddesden better.

Currently, one area of this part of the City sees three houses, all next to each other, on the same road, in three different wards.³ **Two Councillors.**

- 6.9 **Oakwood** – The Council proposed to move some of Oakwood into Breadsall Hilltop, and there are other roads in the area that are part of the old Breadsall ward. Oakwood proper is smaller than the current Oakwood ward, which takes on areas considered part of Chaddesden, as noted by commenters on the Oakwood Conservative Councillor Facebook page – see comments at the end. **Two Councillors.**
- 6.10 **Chaddesden** – The Council correctly identifies Chaddesden is split in half, with the west of Chaddesden pushed into Breadsall Hilltop, an area it shares little in common. Chaddesden as a whole is entitled to four Councillors, so could be split into East and West Chaddesden (with two Councillors each) to reflect the fact that this is one community. **Four Councillors.**
- 6.12 **Spondon** – Spondon ward is very close to breaching tolerance, as is identified by the Council. This needs to be addressed, though it is difficult to do so. Taking a small slice of the Cherry Tree area currently in Chaddesden may assist though to do so would break up part of Chaddesden ward. These areas are demographically similar and share bus routes, shops and other amenities, but the better course of action would be to accept that Spondon is close to the tolerance limit and instead concentrate on improving the tolerance of the rest of this part of the City. **Three Councillors.**

South-East

- 6.13 **Alvaston** – Labour agrees that this ward spans a large geographical area but disagrees with the unsubstantiated claim that the areas close to the City Centre identify with the middle class suburb on the edge of the City. Instead, Labour believes that the industrial, working class inner ring road is better connected to areas like Osmaston than Alvaston Village, whereas Alvaston Village and Boulton have much more in common.

It is better geographically, demographically and for communities for a new Alvaston and Boulton ward to be created. **Three Councillors.**

- 6.14 **Wilmorton and Crewton *NEW WARD*** - the area of Alvaston ward closest to the City is connected very well to Osmaston and is a strong industrial part of Derby. These communities have a lot in common with each other, and very little in common with the suburb of Alvaston Village. Wilmorton and Crewton support two Councillors, but the addition of Osmaston would make it a three Councillor ward.

³ https://derbynews.org.uk/2022/03/06/cllr-poulter-falsely-accuses-labour-of-gerrymandering-on-ward-boundary-review/?fbclid=IwAR25WsfryuCMroCqpd4cHA_0FKrUlsK8YJnjtUz3VaG8eKbBgBWdhvbV16l

Currently the poorest areas of the City share a ward fund with affluent suburbs to the edge of the City. By having their own wards, these areas instead would see dedicated investment. Furthermore, this plan sees the geographic span of the wards decrease significantly, ending the current situation where Alvaston stretches from the City Centre to the outer limits. **Three Councillors.**

- 6.15 **Boulton** – Boulton shares many similarities with Alvaston Village and are both outside the ring road, which divides them from the inner-ring road neighbourhoods. Combining these wards allows them to retain their own voice, and three Councillors.

Boulton also contains a large part of Allenton, with the rest split between Chellaston, Sinfin and Alvaston, and combining Boulton with Alvaston, frees Allenton to be its own ward.

- 6.16 **Chellaston** – The Council submission correctly recognises that Shelton Lock is a community split between Boulton and Chellaston and has no representation. However, their proposal to leave it split and simply rename Chellaston does not reflect the community's best interest at all. Instead, creating a two Councillor Chellaston ward gives this area its own voice, and allows Shelton Lock to be paired with Allenton, which is an area that it borders more closely, shares better demographic and public services ties to, and used to be in a ward with. **Two Councillors.**

- 6.17 **Allenton and Shelton Lock *NEW WARD*** - These two areas are currently cut into pieces between Alvaston, Chellaston, Boulton and Sinfin. Labour proposes reuniting these neighbourhoods and putting them together to form a two Councillor ward. While there is green space between Shelton Lock and Chellaston, and these are demographically distinct, Allenton and Shelton Lock share roads, and are much more homogenous which would make them a well formed ward. **Two Councillors.**

- 6.18 **Sinfin** – The Council again recognises that Osmaston does not share community with Sinfin, but instead of correcting this and adding it to the element of the City it does share jobs, demographics and industry with (Wilmorton and Crewton), the Council proposes leaving it dislocated with Sinfin.

Labour's plan would see the suburb of Sinfin remain a two Councillor ward, and Osmaston join a new ward with Crewton and Wilmorton. **Two Councillors.**

South-West

- 6.19 **Abbey** – The Kingsway estate has little in common with the rest of Abbey ward and is better off part of Littleover, with which it is more similar. Residents in Abbey are likely to be renters, students, young people, refugees and come from diverse backgrounds, whereas residents in the new Kingsway estate are more similar to Littleover – home owners, families and middle class.

Abbey should instead take on the other half of Abbey Street, after which it is named, and return the part of Normanton it includes to Normanton ward. Abbey can also take on some of the City Centre that it is connected to, helping unite this area more consistently. **Two Councillors.**

- 6.20 **Arboretum** – Arboretum ward currently contains the entire City Centre and this causes a high level of case work and development burdens for the Councillors, above the average across the City. By giving up large parts of the City Centre to other wards, Arboretum can focus on the area of the City which gives it its name, and the areas surrounding. With the new Crewton, Wilmorton and Osmaston ward, this gives the area to the South of the City Centre stronger advocates and a better sense of community. This would also bring extra Council resources, funding and attention to the most deprived areas of Derby. **Three Councillors.**
- 6.21 **Blagreaves** - Blagreaves, named after one road in the area, is considered part of Littleover by many of the residents in the north half of this ward. The south half of the ward is split off from Blagreaves by a park, and is adjacent to the Austin Estate, with which it shares a community centre, school and demographics. The North of Blagreaves should be returned to Littleover, and Sunny Hill should become its own ward.
- 6.22 **Sunny Hill *NEW WARD*** - Sunny Hill currently is located in Blagreaves ward, but its community centre is in Normanton. Sunny Hill should become its own ward, with the Austin Estate as it shares a great sense of community in this area. This would support Normanton being reunited with the rest of Normanton currently in Abbey Ward. **Two Councillors.**
- 6.23 **Littleover** – Littleover is a village suburb of Derby that is closely connected to the Royal Derby and Kingsway Hospitals. This is why it makes sense that the new estate, which is demographically similar to Littleover is connected to the ward. Littleover is also separated from Abbey by the A5111 as the Council identifies, so no housing should be moved from Littleover to Abbey across this boundary.
- Removing Heatherton Village from Littleover to create its own ward allows Littleover to take back the north of Blagreaves. This is currently split from Littleover via some backstreets, and is one community. **Three Councillors.**
- 6.24 **Heatherton Village *NEW WARD*** - This area running up to Pastures Hill is a well formed community that is separate from Littleover in many regards. It is the first area you arrive in when coming off the A38 and is distinct in its identity and neighbourhood. Littleover has more in common with the houses and residents to the south in Blagreaves than these residences in Heatherton. **Two Councillors.**
- 6.25 **Normanton** – Normanton is a suburb of Derby that is a well defined community but currently split across the A5111 which is a major road, and into Abbey ward. In Littleover and Abbey, the Council has proposed using the A5111 as the boundary, but does not extend this logic to Normanton or Osmaston. Reuniting the area south of Carlton Road with Normanton allows Abbey to retain its identity while reuniting Normanton. This area would also ensure that Normanton Park is entirely within Normanton. **Three Councillors.**

Overall Response to the Council Proposal

- 7.1 The Council proposal represents an unimaginative, logically flawed ward structure that has been crafted behind closed doors with no public engagement. Only existing Councillors have been able to contribute, leading to defensive drawing of lines that do not reflect existing or developing communities. Communities currently split are not

reunited, and communities that are overshadowed by their larger neighbours are not given their own representation. This matters, because existing as a ward comes with funding, officer time, press attention, as well as improving local pride. The Council is missing an opportunity to invest in the most deprived and impoverished areas of our City.

- 7.2 Furthermore, the Council does not apply its logic consistently – given that it has to defend the status quo which has outgrown its usefulness. The major ring road that surrounds Derby is sometimes used as evidence for splitting communities, and other times ignored to defend the current map. For example, the A38 and A5111 splits three wards in half, but then is used as the rationale for keeping six other wards apart. This is not consistent.
- 7.3 The parliamentary boundaries are also applied inconsistently. The Council is against using cross boundary lines, and uses this to keep areas like Chaddesden separated, but simultaneously is proposing crossing parliamentary boundaries in several wards including Oakwood and Arboretum.
- 7.4 The Council also claims that the “unequal” warding pattern proposal Labour produced was discussed and rejected as part of the workshops, but this was not the case – no proposal for different wards sizes was discussed after the decision to move to all-outs, which naturally changes the rationale in the favour of mixed wards.
- 7.5 Finally, the Council’s plan leaves the North East of the City entirely over-represented. While technically none breach tolerance (though Spondon’s projected figures initially did, and had to be “revised” in order to get them under 10%), the entire area as a whole is too small to be awarded twelve Councillors. Defending this plan to residents in Littleover, Mickleover, Chellaston or Alvaston – all areas that are above tolerance and deserve more representation is not possible, when two Councillor wards solve the problem.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 8.1 Unlike the Council, the Labour Group has consulted widely on these proposals, published them in the local press and distributed across the party membership and wider electorate. Community groups, trade unions, residents and other stakeholders have been consulted, and Labour strongly believes that its proposals meet the changing nature of Derby.
- 8.2 Furthermore, Labour believes that it is better to err on the side of greater representation for neighbourhoods, than to lock in the existing rule of three across the City. Labour urges the Council to allow new areas across Derby to gain their chance for local identity.
- 8.3 Media Coverage of the proposals was picked up on:

Derbyshire Live: <https://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/news/local-news/massive-row-brewing-labour-wants-6701464>

Derby News: <https://derbynews.org.uk/2022/03/06/cllr-poulter-falsely-accuses-labour-of-gerrymandering-on-ward-boundary->

8.4 A selection of comments from Labour's consultation, the Facebook discussions around this and in the media are as included below:

██████████, *iPetition*: "I would like anyone to explain to me why they don't think Heatherton Village should be its own ward. We have the right number of residents, so I think it's about time we are given a chance to have our own say."

██████, *iPetition*: "Knowing the Mackworth, Morley and New Zealand area well, this will be very popular."

██████████, *iPetition*: "I totally agree with the way Labour has set out the boundaries. This gives Councillors to represent the Ward a lot better & also residents to have more say. The current system in place lags, because the area is too big to be covered by all three councillors & leaves some parts of the Ward neglected."

██████████, *Derbyshire Live* "Currently Alvaston and Boulton 6. Allenton 0. An that could change to 3, with 2 between Allenton and Shelton lock. Now who is it who doesn't want this to happen? Oh yes, the Alvaston and Boulton councilors, can't possibly think why."

██████████, *Derbyshire Live* "Looks like a good plan to me, it will give areas a bigger and more locally focused voice. Can't see how this benefits any party over another, councillor's will still need to be elected. Interesting how the likes of Graves and co are rushing to pour contempt over all of this, I wonder why?"

██████████, *Derbyshire Live* "Take away all the rhetoric and smal [sic] minded self interest of all political persuasions and simply examine what has been proposed....What I see is a proposal to make changes that unite areas and constituencies and allow a representation of the electorate"

██████████, *Derbyshire Live* "What Labour are proposing will give areas that don't feel properly represented more representation. Representation that could be by ANY party."

██████████, *Derbyshire Live* "I find it astonishing that Reform/Lib Dems/Tories want to defend a status quo that leaves communities split under the current boundaries, instead of fighting to win the new wards. Maybe that's because they worry they can't compete in fair election?"

██████████, *Derbyshire Live* "Interesting plan which seems to give some new areas a chance for a say. Not sure why anyone can oppose the new areas having a ward as they look like natural communities to me."

██████████, *Facebook* "Great to see Allenton and Shelton Lock being an area - it was nonsense having parts of Allenton in Sinfin. This proposal represents common sense with local communities keeping their own identities and not being 'merged' with other separate localities

