

Solihull

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Please see attached submission from Meriden Conservatives.

Attached Documents:

- Solihull ward Boundaries change submission to Boundary Meriden Conservatives Commission October 2023 (002) (003).pdf

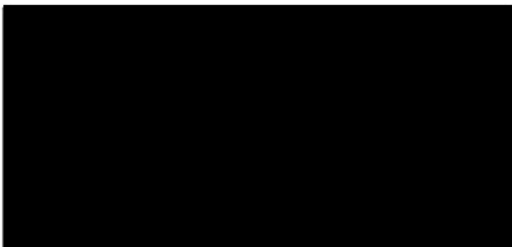
Richard Otterway
Local Government Boundary Commission
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27th October 2023

Dear Sirs

I am writing on behalf of the Meriden Constituency Association enclosing our submission for the preferred option of retaining 17 wards with boundaries adjusted to bring electorate numbers closer to the Borough average for all wards.

Yours faithfully



David Bell
Constituency President

+Solihull ward Boundaries change

Submission to the Boundary commission

The purpose of this note is to make a submission for ward boundaries for the preferred option of retaining 17 wards but with boundaries adjusted to bring electorate numbers closer to the Borough average for all wards

1. Current electorate numbers and projected housing growth

- 1.1. Current electorate numbers result is 3 wards whose electorate numbers fall outside the recommended deviation from the average

Ward	% variance from average 2023
Blythe	+26%
Knowle	-12%
Smiths Wood	-11%

- 1.2. Projected housing growth to 2029 creates more non-conforming wards but brings Knowle to -7% below the average. The resulting “out of tolerance” wards in 2029 become

Ward	% variance from average 2029
Blythe	+39%
Bickenhill	+16%
Meriden	+ 16%
Castle Bromwich	-11%
Dorridge and Hockley Heath	-11%
Shirley East	-14%
Smiths Wood	-14%

- 1.3. There will be significant housing growth beyond 2029 particularly within the following wards

Ward	New homes beyond 2029
Meriden	1323
Bickenhill	3517
Blythe	1105

2. Key objectives of the change

- 2.1. To change ward boundaries to reduce the projected 2029 electorate within Blythe, Bickenhill and Meriden
- 2.2. Where practical increase the electorate in Castle Bromwich, Dorridge & Hockley Heath, Shirley East, and Smiths Wood wards

- 2.3. Pay some regard to housing projections from the local plan beyond 2029 to ensure that the ward electorate numbers do not rapidly become out of date.
- 2.4. Keep communities together where they can be clearly identified as separate from close neighbours and avoiding splitting parishes in the non-parished areas.

3. Proposed boundary changes

This submission supports the position contained within the Solihull Council submission. That Council was independently produced by a team led by SMBC Democratic Services without political direction. As such it has an independent approach. It is supported because it meets the need to move electors from Blythe, Meriden and Bickenhill wards towards those with a deficit without radically changing wards across the Borough. We suggest an option for Castle Bromwich not proposed by the SMBC officers.

3.1. Monkspath

The movement of Monkspath represents a clearly identifiable community which is not parished, unlike the rest of the Blythe ward which is parished. Monkspath has a community school (Monkspath School) and two local community pub/restaurants. It connects well with Hillfield (a key part of the current St Alphage ward) with Hillfield pupils attending Monkspath School and the two areas sharing Hillfield park.

3.2. Meriden Ward

The proposal is to move the whole of Meriden Parish to Bickenhill. That is appropriate for three reasons

- 3.2.1. The parish boundary between Berkswell and Balsall is within Balsall Common and moving Balsall Parish would result in the clear community of Balsall Common being split.
- 3.2.2. Meriden parish is a clear single community despite having several settlement areas. Meriden village on the west has shops, school, community hall, 3 pubs, hotel etc. Millisons Wood on the east is the only other settlement of significant size but has no community facilities relying totally upon Meriden village, even for a park for the children. Practically and culturally Meriden village and Millisons Wood are strongly linked.
- 3.2.3. The remaining elements of Meriden ward will have a below average electorate in 2029 but significant planned housebuilding after 2029 will bring it back to average over a few years.

3.3. Bickenhill

Moving Meriden parish into Bickenhill and significant housing growth, allows

- 3.3.1. A transfer of the parish of Barston with 467 electors into Knowle facilitating a transfer of electors from Knowle into Dorridge, a ward that needs more electors in 2029 because it has a low number of projected new homes. Knowle gets significant new housing in addition to the transfer in of Hampton.
- 3.3.2. In the north 3743 electors are transferred to Chelmsley Wood. These residents live within Chelmsley Wood parish council area and see themselves as part of Chelmsley Wood with BH01 having a Chelmsley Wood postal district. That move facilitates a transfer of electors from Chelmsley Wood into Kingshurst and Smiths Wood wards to bring their numbers within the accepted tolerance of + or – 10%.

3.4. Olton

SE01 runs along the Olton Road by Robin Hood Cemetery so simply by name it really should belong in Olton and that transfer makes geographical sense. It is also connected by a bridle path which runs along the Birmingham Border.

3.5. Shirley

The town of Shirley has a clear identity separate from Solihull. Electors need adding as the wards elsewhere grow due to new housing. The transfer in to Shirley east of the Sharman's Cross area meets that need and consequent reorganisation of ward boundaries within Shirley using features such as main roads balance the numbers across the wards. It should be noted that the residents of Sharman's Cross do not see themselves as living in Shirley but a ward name adjustment (see below in para 4) can recognise that.

3.6. Castle Bromwich

Castle Bromwich is a self-contained ward that coincides with the parish council boundaries. Democratic Services proposed no change despite housing growth elsewhere meaning that the ward falls marginally out of tolerance. If that is not acceptable there is an option which will bring Castle Bromwich into tolerance whilst keeping Smiths Wood in tolerance.

That option is to move the streets - Windsor Road, Buckingham Road, King's Croft, Mey Coppice and Chester Road from Smiths Wood into Castle Bromwich a transfer of 378 electors.

These electors consider themselves Castle Bromwich residents. Their properties are of the same style as the Castle Bromwich 1950's-era dwellings and unlike the home's characteristic to Smith's Wood ward where they are currently situated. The new ward boundary (if required) would then become the perimeter of Smith's Wood playing fields and Smith's Wood Academy. This utilises distinct features as a new boundary. See map. The resulting variance from the average becomes approximately

Ward	Original proposal variance %	Adjusted proposal variance %
Castle Bromwich	-10.6%	-7.8
Smith's Wood	-5.5%	-5.5%

Overview of possible area for transfer



Detail of area for transfer



4. Ward Names

The proposed ward boundaries create the need for different ward names in just three areas. This supports the ongoing sense of local community across the Borough.

Current ward name	Proposed ward name	Justification
Bickenhill	Arden	Bickenhill is the name of one parish within the ward and is not inclusive. Meriden parish will be joining the ward and will lose its synonymous ward name. Arden is a historical local name referring to the Forest of Arden of Shakespeare's time. In planning terms "the Arden landscape" means wooded.
Meriden	Balsall and Berkswell	The name must change because Meriden parish will be leaving the ward. Whilst Balsall Common is the largest settlement there are several others including Temple Balsall and Berkswell and a significant number of rural hamlets. Using the parish names creates an inclusive ward title.
Part St Alphage with Monkspath from Blythe	St Alphage with Monkspath and Hillfield	The two biggest elements of the ward will be contained within the ward name. Whilst St Alphage is a historic name it represents a small very part.
Shirley East and part St Alphage	Sharman's Cross	The transferred area has a clear identity as Sharman's Cross and this should be recognised