

**Response from Bath and North East Somerset Labour Group,
Bath Constituency Labour Party and North East Somerset Constituency Labour Party
to the draft recommendations for Bath and North East Somerset from the
Local Government Boundary Commission for England**

Bath and North East Somerset Labour Group, Bath Constituency Labour Party and North East Somerset Constituency Labour Party welcome the opportunity to respond to the draft recommendations for Bath and North East Somerset from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as follows:

Bath City North

We believe that the historic boundary of the City of Bath should be respected. The primary reason for this is that it would be difficult for a councillor to be effective in representing both a parished and an unparished area. In wards covering both parished and unparished areas there would be issues in the parished area where a B&NES councillor would represent residents, but that same issue might be the responsibility of a Parish councillor in the very same ward. This would not provide for either effective or convenient local government.

Furthermore, far from reflecting a sense of community identity, such proposals have the potential to be divisive. The LGBCE may not be aware that there already is a sense in Bath and North East Somerset of unfairness at the fact that some areas are parished and others are not: residents in parished areas may get the benefit of additional representation and enhanced services but this is at the cost of paying a parish precept. Residents in Bath do not have the benefit of parish representation and the potential for better services. However, they also do not have to pay a parish precept.

This sense of unfairness is difficult enough to manage and understand at an authority-wide level. It would be even more problematic if it was mirrored within a ward.

Respecting the boundary of the City of Bath would have an impact on the LGBCE's proposals for two wards as follows:

Newbridge

The LGBCE's proposals for Newbridge cross the historic City of Bath boundaries. The proposals do not reflect the different communities of city and village. We would suggest that the parishes of Kelston and North Stoke should be included in Bathavon North ward which is a village community and which includes other parished areas.

We note the comments of the LGBCE that the parishes of Kelston and North Stoke have direct road connections only with Newbridge and with built-up areas on the eastern edge of Bristol but not with other parishes in B&NES and we further note that the LGBCE does not normally recommend wards where it is not possible to travel between different parts of the ward without travelling out of it (paragraph 38). However, paragraph 39 of the recommendations then goes on to do precisely that: i.e. to propose that the houses at Westbrook Park and Westmead Gardens plus some dispersed countryside properties, which are only accessible from the proposed Weston ward, are not included within that ward. The precedent therefore has been set.

Larkhall

We object to the LGBCE's proposals for a new Larkhall ward as the proposed boundaries do not extend to include all the areas within the historic City of Bath boundary. We would suggest therefore that the Larkhall ward eastern boundary should re-drawn to include the whole of the unparished area of Bailbrook.

We would even go so far as to suggest that this new, enlarged Larkhall extending to the City's eastern boundary could be joined with the proposed Walcot ward to create a three-member ward.

In support of this, we would point out that Walcot, Fairfield Park and Bailbrook share the same community identity as Larkhall and that Larkhall serves as the heart and the hub of the community. There are a number of diverse clubs and activities, including voluntary and community organisations that operate in Larkhall that attract many people of all ages from the wider community. Larkhall has a vibrant community centre, three schools as well as a shopping centre (with a wide range of shops as well as a café, a dentist and a theatre) and all of these serve the surrounding areas.

Bath City South East

Widcombe / Bathwick

We believe that the area comprising Lime Grove, Lime Grove Gardens and part of Pulteney Road should be moved to Widcombe from Bathwick. People living in this area view themselves as part of Widcombe. Their local shops are situated in Widcombe High Street. Their children attend Widcombe Infant and Junior schools. Local shops and estate agents describe Lime Grove and Lime Grove Gardens as well as the few houses on the east side of Pulteney Road as being in Widcombe.

This area has well-defined boundaries forming a rectangle - the canal to the east, part of Pulteney Road to the west, and steps up from Pulteney Road leading past Lime Grove Gardens to Sydney Buildings and beyond (these steps follow the line of North Parade Road). By adopting this change, the boundaries would better reflect local community identity.

Bath City South-west

Twerton and Southdown

Our response to the proposals for Twerton and Southdown is that the two wards should be divided down the middle of Shophouse Road and The Hollow as these roads form a natural boundary between the two areas.

This would mean moving the Innox Road estate, Cotswold View and the western side of Shophouse Road from Southdown to Twerton and moving Roundhill Park and the south west side of The Hollow from Twerton to Southdown. We believe that Innox Park should be seen not as a divider, but as a focal point for a community which includes both the Innox Road estate and Freeview Road - which both have direct access into the park.

We wholeheartedly agree that the whole of the Whiteway estate should be in one ward and the estate closely identifies with Twerton.

We think the proposed Twerton ward should be renamed Twerton and Whiteway.

Moorlands

While Moorlands may be the name of the local school and Moorland Road is the name of the local shopping street (although this is actually located in the proposed Oldfield Park ward rather than the proposed Moorlands ward), the name of this proposed ward should be changed to Moorfields and The Oval as that is what the two estates are called by those living in the area covered by this proposed ward.

Bathavon North

As stated above, in order to preserve the City of Bath boundary, the proposed inclusion of parts of the unparished areas of Bath within this ward should be removed and the unparished area of Bailbrook included within Larkhall ward.

In addition, as previously stated, the proposed inclusion of the parished areas of Kelston and North Stoke within the predominately unparished ward of Newbridge should be revised so that Kelston and North Stoke are contained within Bathavon North.

The removal of Bailbrook from this proposed ward, and the inclusion of Kelston and North Stoke should ensure the proposal meets the requirements for good electoral equality.

Southern Wards

Radstock

The LGBCE does not appear to have taken into account the significant levels of housing due to be built in Radstock by 2023.

We would suggest therefore that the proposed inclusion of the village of Camerton within Radstock ward should be amended and it should be included instead within Timsbury ward which itself is on the very limits of electoral equality (-10%).

ENDS