

Wyre Forest District Council Proposed Changes to Ward Boundaries
Submission to the Local Authority Boundary Commission
Ref: Current Habberley and Blakebrook Ward

Dear Members of the Boundary Commission,

We write as elected members of Wyre Forest District Council to express our concern at the proposed dismemberment of our community, viz, the Habberley and Blakebrook Ward. We suggest that the Commission is not adhering to its own guidelines: in your draft recommendations you state, “we also aim to ensure that the council wards reflect, as far as possible, the interests and identities of local communities across the District”. How can the division of Habberley Estate reflect this guideline?

We note the Commission’s proposals for eleven three member wards and express strong concerns about whether some of them comply with the Commission’s own policies, an observation also commented upon by Wyre Forest District Council. Why the deviation from the Council’s original suggestion of nine three member wards and three two member wards? Indeed why the reduction to thirty three members in the first place?

The current Habberley and Blakebrook Ward is a well established and cohesive ward with distinct boundaries, although it could be argued that the inclusion of Franche Estate, Ferndale Estate together with the whole of the Co-op supermarket side of Franche Road would enhance Community cohesion in that the Franche Estate would form a continuation of the Trimpley Drive area, Ferndale Estate has geographic synergy with Franche Estate (being across the main road) and the inclusion of the whole of the co-op side of Franche Road would simply be an extension of the current ward boundary. This would not only form a cohesive community with well defined geographic boundaries but would also conform with the proposed numerical proposals.

Habberley and Blakebrook Ward contains a wide range of housing, including the largely social housing of Habberley Estate. It is served by St John’s Primary School and Baxter College 11 – 18 secondary school. Both schools have a wide range of intake and continue to improve in performance and desirability. The Knoll private school is also located within the ward. There are also 3 units of sheltered accommodation and 4 nursing homes serving the needs of elderly people. This is in addition to bungalows and flats largely occupied by the elderly.

A well attended nursery is located within the current ward.

There is a limited range of well used shops and amenities located within the ward and most parts of the ward are on bus routes into Kidderminster Town Centre and the adjacent towns of Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn. The addition of Franche Estate, Ferndale Estate and one side of Franche Road would enhance current facilities, eg the shops on Ferndale Estate, the Co-op supermarket the additional Primary Schools of St Catherines and Franche Community and increased nursery provision. Traditionally young people in this area have attended either Baxter College or Wolverley High School, both being easily accessible.

The churches of our Lady and St Pius, St John the Baptist and Franche Community Church are well established, have thriving congregations and offer a wide range of community activities, eg, food bank Rainbows, Brownies, luncheon clubs, coffee mornings and other “get together” functions, there is also provision of Beavers, cubs and scouts: yet another example of good community provision, cohesion and interaction.

We suggest that the Marlpool Estate and the remaining side of Franche Road could be included in the current Wolverley and Cookley Wards to form one two member ward. Geographically, Marlpool Estate is only yards from the current Wolverley Parish boundary, many young people from Marlpool Estate attend Wolverley High School and Franche Road runs into Wolverley Road.

It is to be hoped that the Commission will accept these proposals as a serious attempt to retain local democracy, social cohesion and sound geographical boundaries, and, as such, be seen in the true spirit of the Commission’s own guidelines.

Sincerely,

Cllr Lynn Hyde, Cllr Mike Kelly, Cllr Barry McFarland