

Bromsgrove Labour Response to the LGBCR

Review Officer
Bromsgrove Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London
EC1M 5LG

Dear Sirs,

Please accept our submission on the revisions to the boundary review for Bromsgrove subsequent to the November 2012 proposals.

We find the proposed changes are likely to be detrimental to the local community and to the ability of elected members to best represent those communities. This is in the respects we have outlined - in particular in mixing urban and rural communities without respect to existing boundaries (including parish), existing communities, amenities and future growth.

As a result I write on behalf of Bromsgrove Labour Party and our elected members to highlight our concerns with the proposed revisions to the November 2012 boundary plan and to put forward some suggestions that we feel are natural, evident and complementary to the existing proposals.

Catshill and Marlbrook

Catshill village has a distinct identity with clear boundaries. Whilst to the East there is a natural blend with the Marlbrook area – to the North and West there is a clear distinction in part as a result of the motorway but also the clear sense of moving from one village to another. Residents in Bournheath would naturally look to Dodford and Fairfield for local services and amenities.

It seems the optimal solution to the management of this would be the provision of a larger two member ward covering the existing Catshill and North Marlbrook areas. Whilst we note the initial request of Bromsgrove Council for single member wards we do feel in this circumstance this is outweighed by the impracticality of artificially splitting a community to arrive at the desired numbers.

Perryfields, Sidemoor, Sanders Park and Hilltop Wards

We readily accept the principal of a Perryfields ward adjacent to Sidemoor to accommodate the future housing development that is in the local plan (in our understanding this represents some 1000 further homes over the 200 or so that have already been built but are not yet shown on your plans).

However with the housing growth in this area (within the lifetime of the local plan) we believe that this ward should stop at the motorway. This forms a clear natural and strategic barrier. It represents the line of the green belt and thus the border of Bromsgrove town and the rural

district that surrounds Bromsgrove. Such a ward would also future proof these boundaries for at least the lifetime of the local plan.

Noting the submission we have already made in respect of the proposals around Catshill; it is our view that there is the need for a rural ward between Catshill and Bromsgrove town incorporating Dodford and Grafton as provided for within your original proposals.

To stop the Perryfields ward at the motorway has the advantage of creating a distinct urban ward with a distinct rural ward beyond. The needs, identity and affinities of the communities between Sidemoor and the motorway will be very distinct to those living in the villages beyond.

In the present Perryfields proposal urban areas such as the new build off Sidemoor (Oldfield Road – not shown on your map as yet) and traditional (such as Carol Avenue) that have been adjuncted to what will geographically be largely a rural ward clearly have a much greater synergy of need and community connection with those urban areas contained within Sidemoor, Sanders Park, Hill Top and Rock Hill.

An alternative would be the consideration of a larger two member ward covering Sidemoor and Perryfields (to the motorway). This would have distinct advantages in representing a ward where traditionally residents often call on their local councillors and where integration of the new development into the existing Sidemoor community is an explicit objective. Notwithstanding the request for consideration of a double member ward we believe that the principle of mixing rural villages with urban new build is both undesirable but also will weaken the ability of members to best serve local residents.

We would like to thank the Local Government Boundary Commission for your work to date and would urge you to reconsider your plans in respect of the above areas. It is our view that the preservation of community links, shared geography and identity should score more highly in consideration against the principle of single member wards and equality in voter numbers.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Peter McDonald

Leader of Bromsgrove Labour Group