

Bradford

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Comment text:

Related subject: Bingley, Baildon & Shipley

Response to LGBCE proposal for Bingley, Baildon & Shipley

I wish to respond to the Commission's revised proposal for new local government ward boundaries in the areas of Bingley, Baildon and Shipley. As a long term resident of Bingley and a former resident of Cullingworth, I strongly object to the proposal to divide Bingley town into two wards - Bingley East and Bingley West. This would mean that the historic town of Bingley would be split by the railway line with most of the town centre in Bingley West along with part of Cottingley and the rural villages of Harden, Wilsden and Cullingworth, whilst the bulk of the population of the town would be in Bingley East.

This is a completely artificial division which fails to meet two of the three statutory criteria i.e. reflecting the identities and interests of local communities and securing effective and convenient local government.

I acknowledge that as the existing Bingley and Bingley Rural wards are too big, changes are required to ensure that the statutory criteria of equality of representation is met. The proposal to transfer the two Denholme wards to Worth Valley makes sense as Denholme has strong connections with the towns of Worth Valley and this also achieves the objective of equality of representation by bringing Worth Valley up to the required range, whilst reducing the electorate of Bingley Rural to within the required range with no need for further changes.

The proposed boundary of Bingley West would place the villages of Cullingworth, Wilsden, Harden and Cottingley into the same ward as Bingley town centre. As a former resident of Cullingworth I know that residents in these villages value the fact that their elected representatives are focused on their interests and concerns, whilst this proposal would mean that local councillors would also have to focus on the quite different issues in the urban area of the proposed ward.

As a resident of Bingley East, I use the shops and facilities of the town centre which would be in Bingley West, so that my local Councillors would not be able to raise any issues I might have with these facilities as they would not form part of their ward.

Bingley is an historic town with a clear geographic footprint, strong social and community relationships and a distinct identity. Local community groups such as Bingley History Society, Bingley Music Town and Friends of Myrtle Park operate and work across the whole town. I am not aware of any other towns within the Bradford Metropolitan district that are split in two in this way, with an electoral boundary drawn through the heart of the community

As well as dividing Bingley in two, the proposals also create an artificial split of Cottingley with half of the village being added to Shipley ward despite there being no obvious connection with that ward.

The revised proposals also involve transferring part of polling district 22A out of Shipley ward to Baildon ward to achieve electoral equality, as an alternative to the transfer of part of Eldwick. However, this proposal would divide the World Heritage site of Saltaire and was rejected by the Commission in the initial report.

The previous proposal recommended in the Commission's original report concluded that to address the fact that Bingley ward needed to be reduced in size to achieve the requirement for electoral equality, the eastern and partly rural area of Eldwick should be transferred to the neighbouring ward of Baildon. Whilst not being a perfect solution this would be a much less disruptive change than the very considerable disruption which would be involved if the revised proposals were implemented.

The Commission's revised proposals are based to a large extent on the submission made by Baildon Town council whose primary objective was to reinstate the historic parish boundary of Baildon whilst ignoring the significant detrimental impact that this has on the other three wards, in particular splitting Cottingley in two and the even more disruptive division of Bingley.

In conclusion I would strongly suggest that the Commission should re-consider their revised proposals and re-instate their previous recommendations as being a far preferable solution.

Attached Documents:

None attached