

Bradford

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Comment text:

Hi

Please find attached a boundary review submission for the Further Draft Recommendations from the Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group on Bradford Council.

Regards

Rebecca

Cllr Rebecca Poulsen

Worth Valley Ward Councillor
Leader Conservative Group Bradford MDC

Attached Documents:

- bmdc-conservative-submission-august2024.docx

Bradford MDC Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group, further draft recommendations for the new electoral arrangements in the areas of Baildon, Bingley and Shipley and South of the City Centre of City of Bradford.

FAO the Review Officer

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England

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Blyth

NE24 9FE

Bradford MDC Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group, further draft recommendations for the new electoral arrangements in the areas of Baildon, Bingley and Shipley and South of the City Centre of City of Bradford.

(Note: The then Conservative Group submitted proposals to the initial Commission consultation regarding future electoral arrangements for the Bradford Metropolitan District Council area. This document is submitted on behalf of the now Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group, further to the formation of the newly named group, following a collaborative agreement between the Conservative Group of councillors and Queensbury Independent Councillor Luke Majkowski).

1. In response to the LGBCfE's (the Commission) initial consultation exercise regarding future electoral arrangements for Bradford District, the then Conservative Group on the Council submitted carefully deliberated recommendations.

1.2 The Group took great effort to base its initial submission upon the stated aims of the Commission, as copied here.

“The Commission aims to propose a pattern of wards for Bradford which delivers:

- *Electoral equality: each local councillor represents a similar number of electors*
- *Community identity: reflects the identity and interests of local communities*
- *Effective and convenient local government: helping your council discharge its responsibilities effectively*

A good pattern of wards should:

- *Provide good electoral equality, with each councillor representing, as closely as possible, the same number of electors*
- *Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links*
- *Be based on strong, easily identifiable boundaries*
- *Help the council deliver effective and convenient local government.*

Electoral equality:

- *Does your proposal mean that councillors would represent roughly the same number of electors as elsewhere in Bradford”?*

1.3 Further to the Commission’s first Draft Proposals, the Conservative Group were somewhat surprised by some of the Commission’s Initial Draft Proposals, particularly the division of as distinct a community, with as close to ideal electoral equality projected for 2029, as the famous settlement of Ilkley, which whilst clearly intended to improve the serious variances in Craven and Wharfedale Wards, seemed more divergent from the stated hierarchy of the priorities of the review than Group Members had anticipated.

1.4 The section of the Commission’s latest proposals, relating to the collection of six Bradford South District Wards are also surprising, as they also seem to be augmented by an interpretation of the hierarchy of the Review’s aims, markedly differing from what was expected by the then Conservative Group.

1.5 In light of the Group’s best attempts to adhere to the Commission’s aims in the order of priority as listed, the call for further proposals in response to the Commission’s Draft Recommendations was perceived to be unlikely to result in any changes which would align with the Group’s interpretation of these stated priorities.

1.6 It was thus decided that the Group response to the Commission’s Draft Proposals, would be to make a few key points regarding the contents of the draft proposals, rather than a complete re-write, which appeared more likely to be adopted, only if it treated the hierarchy of ambitions regarding electoral equality and maintaining strong community identities in a radically different manner than the then Conservative Group did.

1.7 Having deliberated the further Draft Recommendations, it is clear that the Commission was open to more substantive revisions than Group Members had anticipated.

1.8 Unfortunately, the Group are subsequently now limited in what can realistically be submitted in the latest period of consultation on further draft recommendations in the specific areas of Baildon, Bingley and Shipley, and the area to the Southeast and Southwest of the City Centre, though the Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group, has revisited its previous submissions and updated its thoughts to reflect the current situation, as published herein.

1.9 As with the then Conservative Group submission to the Commission’s initial consultation exercise, the now Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group have based this submission upon our consistent interpretation of the stated aims and question posed by the Commission in developing proposals for new electoral arrangements for the Bradford Metropolitan District Council area.

1.10 The Group has continued to treat “the provision of good electoral equality, with each councillor representing, as closely as possible, the same number of electors” as the primary objective.

1.11 The projected ward electorate variances for 2029 show that the then Conservative Group’s original proposals satisfy the criteria (included in Paragraph 1.2 of this document) more appropriately than the Commission’s latest proposals and any slight variations thereof.

Bradford MDC, Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group, further draft recommendations in the areas of Baildon, Bingley and Shipley.

Ward 1. Baildon.

2.1 The original Conservative Group submission to the Commission’s initial consultation exercise, contained in Paragraph 6.29, stated that “A cursory glance at a map of the town’s existing Polling Districts with 22A added shows the change provides for good community identity, bringing in the only Polling District, currently included in Shipley Ward, which is located to the north of the river, adjoining Baildon. The case is strengthened in terms of effective governance, in that 22A already falls within the Parish of Baildon and is, consequently, governed at lower tier level by Baildon Town (formerly Parish) Council. The electoral variance of 7.5% seems acceptable, when viewed as part of the wider proposals”.

2.2 As such the difference between this position and that of the Baildon Town Council which has largely been accepted by the Commission and thus the subsequently very similar latest proposal from the Commission and the Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group raises no objections to either proposal.

Wards 2 & 3. Bingley & Bingley Rural / Bingley East & Bingley West.

2.3 The original Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group submission to the Commission’s initial consultation exercise, made clear in Paragraph 2.3 that as the Worth Valley covers the largest geographical footprint of any Bradford Metropolitan District Ward at nearly 59km², it was not considered feasible, Paragraph 2.4 to incorporate the Denholme element of Bingley Rural included in Polling Districts 3H & 3G, or Polling District 3H and the part of Polling District 3G to the West of the A58.

2.4 The reason for this, is that there would be the addition of a geographical area in itself larger than some wards, to what is already geographically the largest ward in Bradford District and it

is unrealistic to expect three elected members to be able to effectively represent such a large electorate in such an oversized geographical ward.

2.5 Whilst The Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group continue to have these concerns, it is acknowledged that the decision taken does provide different opportunities and disadvantages for the protection of Eldwick community identity via its retention within a Bingley Ward.

2.6 Also, as the Commission has specified that further submissions are to specifically relate to the grouping of Baildon, Bingley, Bingley Rural and Shipley wards and separately a group of wards to the South of Bradford City Centre, this criterion effectively precludes the submission of suggestions from any stakeholders, which do not quite closely mirror the proposals already on the table.

2.7 The then Conservative Group's perception that there was unlikely to be significant change to the Commission's initial Draft Proposals and the subsequent decision by the Group to submit limited suggestions in the consultation regarding them, particularly in relation to the Worth Valley Ward, leaves less room for manoeuvre regarding proposals which oppose the inclusion of the Bingley Central & Myrtle Park (currently Polling Districts 2A and 2J) areas, in the proposed Bingley West Ward.

2.8 However, the removal of the approximately 2782 voters in these Polling Districts from the current Bingley Rural Ward clearly facilitates the protection of Eldwick and the Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group have thus taken the decision to broadly support the latest proposals for Bingley East & West Wards.

2.9 It is clear from Paragraph 20 of the Commission's further recommendations "*Having considered all the various options, we came to the view that it was not possible to provide a warding pattern that did not divide a settlement within Bingley parish between wards, while ensuring a good level of electoral equality*", that the now Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group and the Commission have along the way encountered the same problems but initially chosen different starting points and also settlements for division in a few areas.

2.10 The Group recognises and acknowledges that the updating of electoral arrangements is a far from precise science and that it is inevitable that there is never going to be universal consensus. It is noted that the initial ward selected as a starting point by any contributors' will, along with a plethora of other factors, contribute to the individual / organisation's final proposals.

2.11 Thus, whilst the Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group continues to be disappointed by the outcomes of the Commission's decisions relating to the high-profile settlement of Ilkley and the unwieldy size of the proposed Worth Valley Ward, which significantly breaches the natural boundaries of the Valley, it is acknowledged that the latest proposals regarding the outcome for Eldwick is a silver lining from these decisions.

Bradford MDC, Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group, further draft recommendations in relation to the area to the Southeast and Southwest of Bradford City Centre.

3. The Conservative and Queensbury Independent Group are surprised that the Commission is supportive of proposals which deliver relatively poor and in a number of cases significantly worse electoral equality than already existed. A classic example being Queensbury, which would have a variance of 1% in 2029 if simply left as it stands but will have a variance of 10% should the Commission's latest proposals be adopted.

3.1 As shown in Paragraph 1.13 The Commission's proposals for this Group of six wards fare poorly in electoral terms when compared with those of the Conservative & Queensbury Independent Group.

3.2 The Group remains of the view that the proposals contained within our initial submission were a good match for the Commission's criteria, though, in recognition of the need for updates to take place from time to time, we aimed to achieve as close to electoral equality as possible, whilst still taking into account community identity etc.

3.4 Whilst we were mindful of the Commission's view that a variance of between -10% and +10% constituted good electoral equality, the Group thought that the outer limits of this range would be a last resort proposal and lower variances would be preferable in the immediate near, medium and long term future. However, as mentioned previously, the Group acknowledges that due to the imprecise nature of Boundary Reviews, it is inevitable that stakeholder submissions will rarely be very similar.

3.5 As The Commission's decision to launch a further consultation, which precludes the bulk of substantive proposals, those not closely aligned to what is already on the table, whilst the Conservative & Queensbury Independent Group remain of the view, that whilst our original proposals contained compromises differing to those accepted by the Commission, we accept that we are where we are and the latest proposals for Baildon, Bingley and Shipley have merits and we are supportive.

3.6 With regards to the Commission's proposals for the group of six wards in the South of the District, the Conservative Group remain of the view that our previously submitted proposals provided a way forward which satisfied the Commission's required criteria to a high degree than those on the table now and we are not supportive of the proposals.