

Sandwell

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Organisation Name: Halesowen Conservative Association (Political groups)

Comment text:

Related subject: Rowley Regis

Please see attached submission

Attached Documents:

- halesowen-conservative-association-boundary-consultation-response-2024.docx

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing on behalf of Halesowen Conservative Association to propose new ward boundaries for the existing Cradley Heath and Old Hill ward.

Halesowen Conservative Association is proposing the reorganisation of these areas into two new wards, Cradley Heath ward and Blackheath and Old Hill ward. The Association feels that this would be a sensible distribution of local towns which would better reflect the need for Cradley Heath, as the largest of these towns, to be represented within one ward rather than split between three as it is currently.

We understand that this would require further distribution of ward boundaries to ensure that each ward fulfilled the elector numbers required. Therefore, we endorse the submission of Sandwell Conservative Group whose proposals align with those set out below.

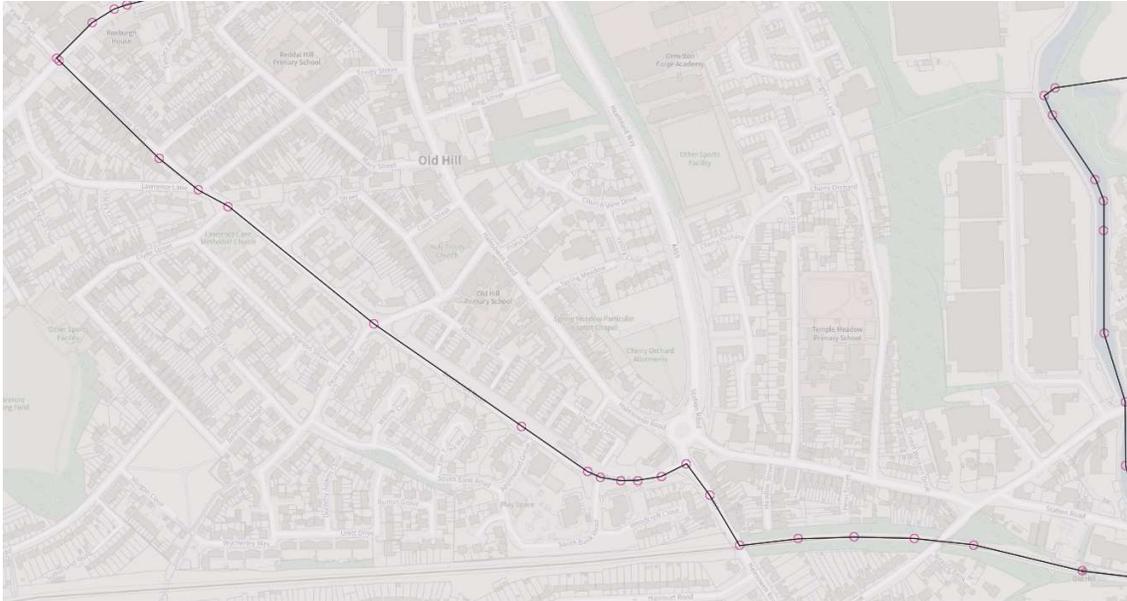
The existing Cradley Heath and Old Hill ward incorporates the majority, but not all, of the Old Hill town area and parts of Cradley Heath. Remaining areas that have a Cradley Heath address and associate mostly with the Cradley Heath town are distributed between the existing Blackheath and Rowley wards.

An example of this would be the BLG polling district of Blackheath ward. The south-eastern section of Station Road and the cul-de-sacs leading from it, as well as the western side of Gorsty Hill Road all have Cradley Heath addresses. Additionally, this polling district has been retained in the Halesowen constituency recognising the local ties with the Cradley Heath and Halesowen areas.

There are other areas in the existing Blackheath ward that also have a Cradley Heath address and form part of the wider Cradley Heath area, such as the area around Waterfall Lane including Higgs Field Crescent, Perry Park Road, Grange Road and Manson Drive plus others.

Recognising that all of these Cradley Heath residential areas cannot come under one ward boundary without significant change to the existing Cradley Heath and Old Hill ward, we are proposing to split Old Hill from this ward and merge it with Blackheath a newly formed Blackheath and Old Hill ward.

There is already a well formed, clear boundary between the Cradley Heath and Old Hill towns that runs along Claremont Street, into Lawrence Lane, Beechcroft Road, Halesowen Road before joining the railway line.



Clear and sensible boundary between the proposed Cradley Heath ward and Blackheath and Old Hill ward

We believe that this is a clear boundary that makes for sensible local government given there are limited numbers of residential properties on opposite sides of the road being split, with the majority of this area on Beechcroft Road having no road facing residential addresses at all. The properties to the north of this boundary line are clearly within the catchment area of the much smaller Old Hill town and the majority have Old Hill within their address, whereas those to the south of the boundary are far more closely associated with Cradley Heath as is represented by their proximity to major Cradley Heath amenities such as Bearmore Playing Fields, Cradley Heath Masjid and Corngreaves Academy.

We recognise that there are properties on opposite sides Claremont Street and Lawrence Lane that would be split between wards, however, we feel this is appropriate given the clear and obvious boundary between the two towns that exist on these roads. If commissioners feel that it would be inappropriate to split the roads between two wards, we would instead recommend placing the boundary behind properties on the northern side of Claremont Street and Lawrence Lane.

The aforementioned polling district BLG has been included within the new Cradley Heath ward as are the areas around Waterfall Lane in polling districts BLH and small parts of BLA. The boundaries chosen here largely reflect existing polling districts except for the inclusion of all of Waterfall Lane, Perry Park Road, Terrace Street and Higgs Field Crescent in the Cradley Heath ward to ensure clear and sensible boundaries for effective local government.



New ward boundary for Cradley Heath ward that unites Cradley Heath addresses currently in the Blackheath ward with the rest of their local town in one single ward

The resulting Cradley Heath ward would be marginally too small for the acceptable thresholds imposed by the Commission. Therefore, we would also include a small section of the existing Rowley ward, that also has Cradley Heath addresses, in the new ward. This would effectively retain the boundary on Reddal Hill ward but turn it into a boundary between two wards rather than three and result in the northern part of Reddal Hill road, Brook Lane and Hickman's Avenue becoming part of the Cradley Heath ward.

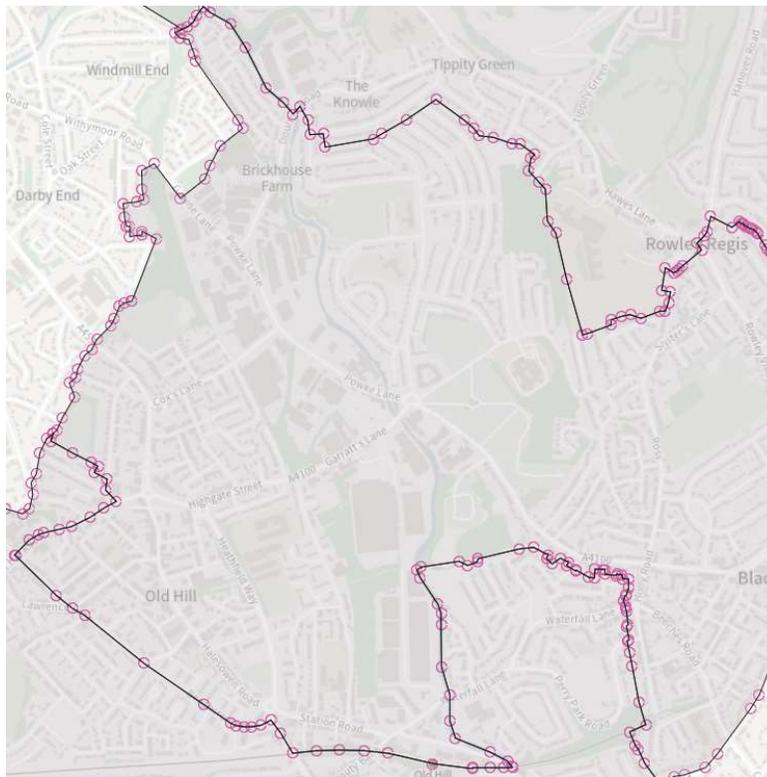


New ward boundary for Cradley Heath ward bringing small parts of Cradley Heath town into the respective ward and eliminating existing three-way boundary between wards for more sensible and efficient local government

The resulting new Cradley Heath ward would then incorporate the vast majority of all areas both colloquially considered to be part of the town and has Royal Mail addresses that reflect their inclusion within the historic Cradley Heath area.

These changes would allow for the formation of a new Blackheath and Old Hill ward. This new ward would unite all Old Hill within one ward, as opposed to the two it is currently split between. This would also link the Brickhouse estate currently in Rowley ward with the town centres it has far more links with, namely Old Hill and Blackheath.

The existing ROG and ROF polling districts in the Rowley ward have far more in common with the towns of Old Hill and Blackheath than they do with the rest of the residential area within the existing Rowley ward. Indeed, the Rowley ward itself is an amalgamation of different housing estates that have little in common with one another as they lack a dedicated town centre or wider coherent community to be linked with. ROG in particular, minus Reddal Hill Road, Brook Lane and Hickman's Avenue, are clearly part of the Old Hill town area but has previously been included within the Rowley ward to achieve the required electoral numbers. This proposed Blackheath and Old Hill ward would unite all of Old Hill in a single ward and combine that with the distinct Brickhouse estate in ROH polling district to allow for the clear geographic and cultural links to both Old Hill and Blackheath.

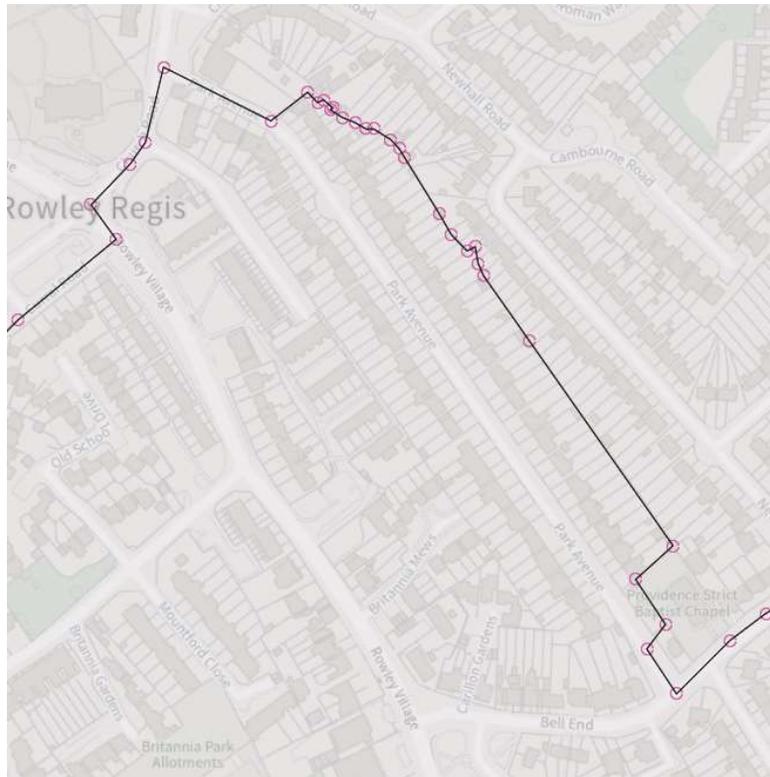


New ward boundary for Blackheath and Old Hill ward, uniting all of Old Hill town in one ward and bringing the Brickhouse estate within the ward to reflect greater local links with Old Hill and Blackheath towns than other areas in the existing Rowley ward

To reflect that we need to achieve electoral equality as best as possible, we would propose areas moving out of the Blackheath ward into neighbouring wards in conjunction with the submission by

Sandwell Conservative Group. This includes redistributing BLC and BLD to neighbouring wards in a new pattern that reflect local ties as detailed in their submission.

The final element of the redistribution would be the inclusion of Park Avenue, Long Meadow, Britannia Mews and Carillion Gardens as well as a small part of Bell End, currently in ROE polling district, in the new Blackheath and Old Hill ward to ensure that the ward met the required number of electors. Additionally, those roads are also far more closely associated with the Blackheath area given they are in such close proximity to amenities such as Britannia Park and Blackheath town centre.



New ward boundary for Blackheath and Old Hill ward to include small areas of ROE district that have greater links with Blackheath town than the rest of Rowley ward and to achieve electoral equality.

We believe that these new ward patterns, when viewed alongside those proposed by Sandwell Conservative Group, better reflect the historical towns of Cradley Heath, Blackheath and Old Hill as well as existing local ties. They also have the effect of unifying large areas of Old Hill and Cradley Heath respectively that are currently in different wards and drawing more clear and sensible boundaries between different towns whilst also meeting the electoral equality thresholds set out by the Commission.

I would like to thank the Commissioners for taking the thoughts and views of local residents into consideration when determining these new boundaries.

Yours faithfully,

Ian Bevan

Chair, Halesowen & Rowley Regis Conservative Association.