

Swindon

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Comment text:

Related subject: Whole Council / Borough

Please see the attached file which is the Swindon Labour Group's response to your draft proposals for Swindon.

Attached Documents:

- lgbc-review-swindon-lab-gp-response-sep-24.pdf

Local Government Boundary Review for Swindon

Swindon Labour Group Response to Commission's Proposals

Forward

Having studied, in detail, the draft proposals of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's proposals for Swindon, we were pleased that the Commission's report acknowledged the submission made by us as part of the first consultation process and, in a number of cases, included our proposals in their recommendations.

However, there are still a number of areas where the Swindon Labour Group have concerns about the Commission's proposals as a solution to the future boundaries of Swindon Borough Council. Some of these are just minor alterations and others are more significant.

We have broken our response down, where possible, into the same areas used within the Commission's report and there are two supporting appendices, which gives greater detail to our proposed changes to South Swindon. We are also proposing a few ward name changes which are dealt with under each section.

Central Swindon North

We believe that the Commission is not correct in its assumption (par. 45 of their report) that Gorse Hill and Pinehurst have little in common. Both communities have been in the same ward since the Borough of Swindon was established in 1997 and there is a smooth geographical connectivity between the two communities. The same cannot be said for Penhill and Pinehurst except that they are two council estates.

As part of its proposals, the commission have used the case that there is a clear difference between Gorse Hill (mostly private terrace housing) and Pinehurst (mostly semi-detached council or former council housing), for splitting these two communities apart. Then in the same set of recommendations, have added the Headlands Grove and Wheeler Avenue area (GPE) to the Penhill and Pinehurst Ward.

The Headlands and Wheeler Avenue area (GPE) has nothing in common with either the Penhill or Pinehurst communities and was an outlier in the present Gorse Hill and Pinehurst Ward. The GPE area has more in common with the new Gorse Hill Ward than the Penhill and Pinehurst Ward, however we do acknowledge that the inclusion of the GPE polling district within the proposed new Gorse Hill ward would take this single member ward above the 10% variance.

The report also states that there was support for a single member Penhill ward from residents. The Labour Group's original proposal was to create such a ward, with a small number of houses at the start of the estate, most of which were never part of the Council's original Penhill housing estate and are more closely associated with the street leading into Sevenfields from Whitworth Road (Crossway Avenue and the streets leading off), which would form part of our proposed Rodbourne Cheney ward.

Taking the above into consideration we believe, in relation to the Gorse Hill, Headlands, Penhill & and Pinehurst areas, that the original proposals submitted by the Swindon Labour Group is the best solution. The single member ward for Penhill would see one Councillor representing 98% of the Penhill council estate. It would also allow the retention of Gorse Hill and Pinehurst as a two-member ward, giving a geographical continuity for the vast majority of this well-established electoral area.

As for the proposed Rodbourne Ferndale Ward, we do accept the case made by the commission to put the area of Pinehurst, formally in the RCA polling district, into a new Rodbourne Cheney ward, as this area has stronger links with the Beech Avenue area of Pinehurst, than the rest of RCA. Additionally, we have reservations about removing GPF polling district from the Rodbourne Cheney ward. We acknowledge that these streets do form part of the Haydon Wick Parish, but they have no established link to the rest of the parish or the Haydon Wick ward and would therefore sit best geographically in the Rodbourne Cheney Ward. This would also allow for a more solid, geographical link to the small part of Penhill that would also form part of our proposed Rodbourne Cheney ward.

We acknowledge that some GFP residents feel strongly that this polling district should be part of Haydon Wick and whilst we would disagree with this assumption, we do accept that the Commission may wish to continue to take this into consideration as part of their final proposals. If this is the case, this would not rule out our proposal to add Cricklade Road (north of Whiteworth Road), Trowbridge Close and a small element of houses at the beginning of Penhill to our proposed Rodbourne Cheney ward.

We fully support the proposed Rodbourne Ferndale Ward, which is almost, with the exception of a small part of Pinehurst (as mentioned above), what we proposed in our original submission to the Commission. With regards to the name, we were minded to support the premise put forward in the Conservative proposals. There has been a long tradition to have a ward name linked to our historical connection with the Great Western Railway and that name has been used for a ward that includes the Even Swindon (Rodbourne) area, MWA and MWD. The proposed Rodbourne Ferndale covers most of the old Western ward and the ward that covers the Even Swindon area now is Mannington and Western. Therefore, we suggest that the Commission look favourably on renaming Rodbourne Ferndale as Western or Great Western Ward.

Ward	Cllrs	Electorate (2029)	2029 Variance
Gorse Hill & Pinehurst	2	6745	+8.5%
Penhill	1	3383	+9%
Rodbourne Cheney	2	6372	+2.6%
		6032 (less GPF)	-2.8%
Rodbourne Ferndale (Western)	3	9067	-2%

South Swindon

Whilst understanding and accepting the reasons why the commission decided to exclude Badbury Park from the south Swindon proposals, we still have three major concerns with the Commission's proposals for South Swindon.

1. The splitting of the Railway Village.

2. The splitting of Walcot.
3. The geographical size of the proposed Croft & Lawn ward.

Railway Village: This is a landmark heritage estate right in the heart of Swindon and forms part of the railway heritage action area. These listed houses are mostly owned by the council and forms part of Council's HRA housing stock. The houses and other buildings that form part of this heritage area have their own unique issues. The Commission's proposals would see the estate and the heritage action area split in two.

To avoid this, there is a need for the estate and the rest of the heritage action area which includes the Health Hydro and the GWR park in Faringdon Road, to be in either the Kingshill and Okus ward or the Queen's Park ward. Our view is that the whole of the heritage area would be better positioned in the Queen's Park ward, resulting in the whole of the Swindon town centre being in one ward. This will allow for a better cohesion in representative terms, allowing one team of councillors to voice the needs of the whole of, what is consider the centre of Swindon, which will be of particular significance when it comes to the future generation of Swindon's town centre and its surrounding areas.

Walcot: We reject the Commission conclusions as stated in paragraph 58 of the report and would advise the Commission that both Walcot East and Walcot West have been represented in the same ward going back to Thamesdown Borough Council and Wiltshire County Council days. Whilst different in their constituent make-up, Walcot has always been divided by the A4259 and despite the two areas, being made up of contrasting housing stock, have always been treated as one.

We would also point out that the Commission's proposed alternative of Broadgreen and East Walcot has many of the factors that the Commission has used for not including both parts of Walcot into one ward. This includes the A4312 being a similar divide between Walcot East and the rest of the ward, which is further compounded by a corridor of commercial and educational properties that abut one side of this road. There is also a distinct difference between the County Ground / Shrivensham Road area and Walcot East community, which is very similar to the differences being used by the Commission to rule out Walcot East and West being in the same ward.

Croft & Lawn Ward: This proposed ward would stretch from the Magic Roundabout at the County Ground to the M4 at the rear of Coate Water and westwards along the M4 to the middle of the Wichelstowe development. Whilst the ward is well within the electoral variance, only 3% above, the geographical size for this urban ward, is more in keeping with those in a rural area. To overcome this, we recommend Walcot West is removed, which will result in the ward being a more manageable geographical size. This will also allow Walcot West to join Walcot East in the proposed new Walcot ward.

The remaining part of the ward along with a small part of the Kingshill and Okus ward would be the amended Croft and Lawn ward. This smaller area would better reflect the ward's name and give better community cohesion to the ward. Our proposal would see the removal of The Mall and roads south and eastwards of it that form part of the present OTA polling district, being moved from the Kingshill and Okus ward into the Croft and Lawn ward. This area sees itself as part of Old Town and has greater connectivity with that area than the Westcott Place / Dean Street area of the Kingshill and Okus ward.

The above change will also mean changing the Kingshill and Okus ward. In our proposals, it will be a two-member ward, with the removal to the north of its part of the Railway Village to the south east of the Old Town side of OTA.

It is also suggested that the boundary that runs at the back of Woods Street from Albert Street to Cricklade Street between Queen’s Park and Kingshill and Okus wards, should be replaced with a new boundary that runs from the roundabout at the top of Victoria Road, down the western rear edge of Devizes road until it meets with the old railway line and the present boundary line between Kingshill and Okus and the Croft and Lawns wards. By moving this boundary (the affected streets are listed at A4 in appendix 1) all of the Old Town shopping and night time economy provision will come under one ward.

We would also recommend that the Kingshill and Okus ward be renamed to “Okus & Westcott. This would better reflect the two main areas this new amended ward would cover.

Ward	Cllrs	Electorate (2029)	2029 Variance
County Ground	2	6741	8.5%
Walcot	2	5960	- 4%
Parks	2	6823	9.8%
Croft & Lawn	3	8812	- 5.4%
Okus & Westcott	2	5963	- 4%
Queen’s Park	3	9721	4.4%

East Swindon

Badbury Park, Eldene & Liden and Covingham & Nythe: When submitting our original proposals, we tried wherever possible to follow the guidelines set out by the commission and keep ward boundaries within existing parish boundaries, as reflected in paragraph 74 of your report. However, we are minded to support the Commissions alternative proposals for this part of East Swindon.

Lower Stratton & Upper Stratton: We still feel that a small adjustment between the two wards is required around Fitzwarren Court and Barnes Road, which would see this area move into Upper Stratton. This minor change would offer better connectivity to this new developing area via Kingsdown Road, rather than the A419 connection that is required if it is to remain in the new Lower Stratton wards. Other than this minor change we have no other objections to these two proposed wards.

West Swindon

As the two wards proposed are basically the same as we proposed we have no objections to the Commission’s boundary recommendations for West Swindon. However, we do feel that the ward name of “Lydiard, Freshbrook & Toothill” whilst reflecting the areas covered by the ward, it is too long and a more succinct name would be more appropriate. As the ward covers the whole of Lydiard Park, a major Swindon landmark and facility, calling the ward after it would be more appropriate.

Haydon Wick

Whilst the Commission's proposals does not reflect our wish for three two-member wards, we accept that there is reasoning to the Commission's proposals and in fact, this was originally considered by the local Labour Party before ending up with our three two-member alternative proposals. In view of this we have no objections to the Commission's proposals for the Haydon Wick and Priory Vale wards.

St. Andrews

We note the positive comments made by the Commission in paragraph 105 of their report in respect of Labour's proposals for St. Andrews. We further note the reason why the Commission have opted to support the views of local residents and the parish council over the case we put forward. As with Haydon Wick, the Commission's proposals did form part of our original thinking for this area and, in view of this, we have no objections to the two St. Andrews' wards.

Rural North

We welcome the Commission's decision to support our proposal for the new Blunsdon ward and can also see the logic they have put forward for the two-member Highworth Ward and the single member South Marston ward. Therefore, we have no objections to these proposals.

Rural South

Our submission as acknowledge in paragraph 115 of the report suggested that a small piece of Burderop Park be transferred to the Wroughton and Wichelstowe ward as this was required to make sure that the Ridgeway ward remained within the 10% variance based on the 2029 projections. However, if the Commission is stating that, with the inclusion of the Burderop Park within the new Chiseldon and Ridgeway ward, this will not breach the 10% variance, then we have no objection to either of the proposed two wards, which basically reflects what we were proposing for this part of the borough.

Appendix One

Walcot		County Ground	
Walcot & Park North WPA	2413	Central CEC	5374
Walcot & Park North WPB	1754	Central CED	1367
Walcot & Park North WPC	1793		
	5960		6741
Croft Lawns		Okus & Westcott	
Lawn & Badbury Park CLA	2664	Proposed Kingshill & Okus*	8663
Lawn & Badbury Park CLD	3	Less OTA Part (A2)	-1101
		*A3 - OTA roads remaining in ward	
Old Town OTD	2286	Less ETC Part (A4)	-117
Old Town OTC	1868	Less CEB Part (A1)	-648
Old Town OTB	1300		

Plus Old Town OTA Part (A2)	1101	Less OTC Part (A5)	-777
Less Old Town Shops (A4)	-410	Less OTD Part (A6)	-57
	8812		5963

Queens Park

Proposed Queens Park	8663
Plus CEB (A1)	648
Plus Old Town Shops (A4)	410

9721

Parks

Walcot & Park North WPD	3325
Park South LEA	2151
Park South LEB	1347

6823

A1

Bathampton Street	46
Bristol Street	22
Exeter Street	53
Taunton Street	31
Church Place	17
Faringdon Road	19
Milton Road	114
Tennyson Street	61
Maxwell Street	55
Chester Street	76
Theobald Street	79
Lorne Street	32
Cambria Bridge Road	25
Emlyn Square	18

Total A1 648

A2

Belmont Crescent	77
Commonweal Road	12
Field Rise	76
Goddard Avenue	364
Mill Lane	65
Roman Crescent	62
The Mall	224
The Marlestons	27
The Quarries	29
Westlecott Road	155
Wichelstok Close	10

Total A2 1101

A3

Chain Court	88
Bankside	64
St Helen's View	24
Sarsen Close	44
Tithe Barn Crescent	65
Okus Road	269
Curie Avenue	64
Seacole Crescent	173
Pasture Drive	204
Portland Avenue	48
Tuke Way	72
Galen View	59
Withering Road	73

A4

Devizes Road (OTC)	53
Wood Street (ETC)	22
Joiner Lane (ETC)	4
Godwin Court (ETC)	60
Newport Street (OTD)	46
Station Approach (OTD)	11
Old Brewery Lane (ETC)	31
Saxon Court (OTD)	15
Beatty Court (OTD)	49
Dammas Lane (OTD)	11
Horders Mews (OTD)	33
Charlotte Mews (OTD)	36
Cricklade Street (OTD)	39

Celsus Grove	129		
Bacon Close	11	Total A4	410
Florey Court	82		
Yersin Court	76		

Total A3 1545

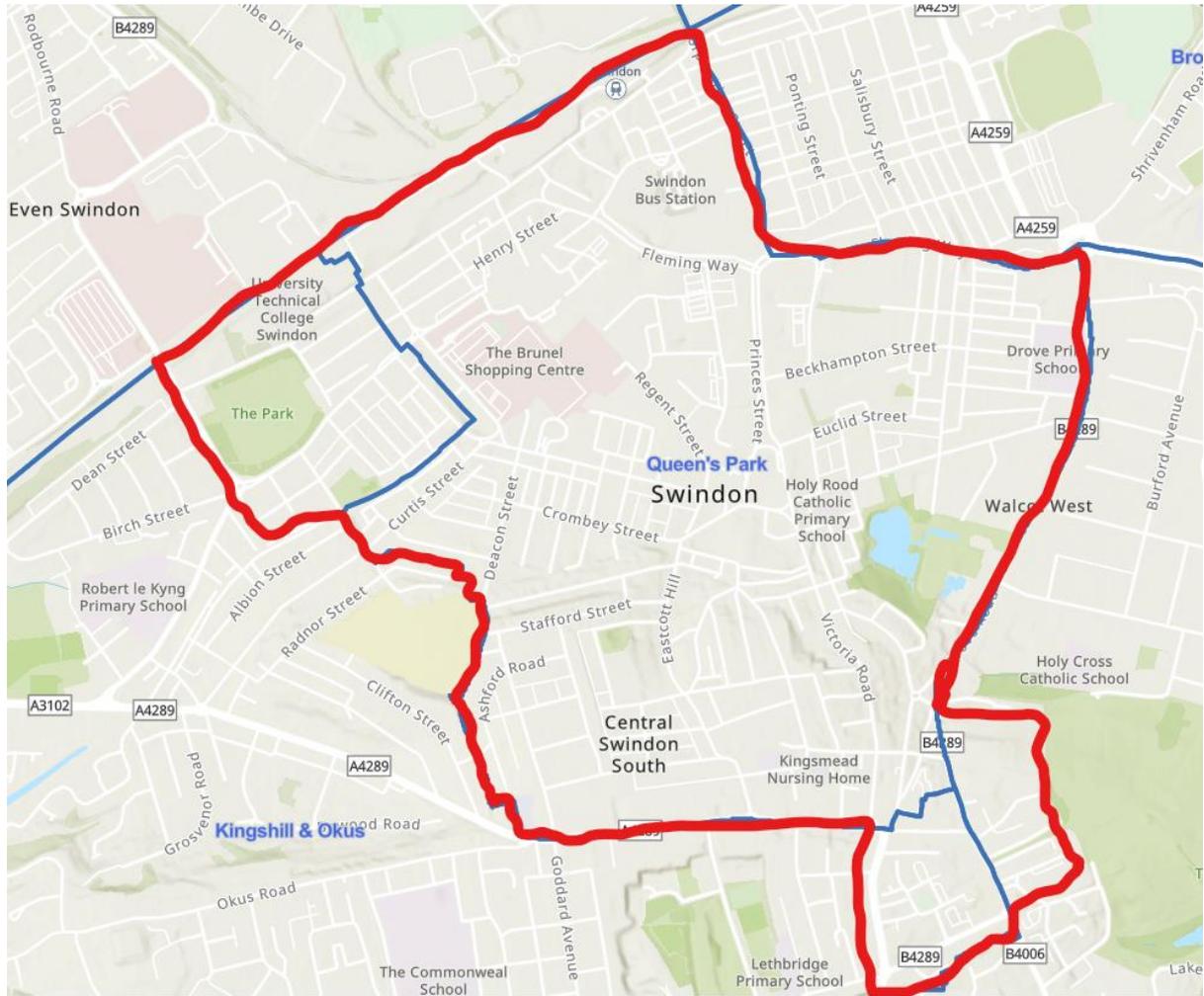
A5		A6	
Bowling Green Lane	17	Newport Street	46
Avenue Road	181	Station Approach	11
Lethbridge Road	46		
Ripley Road	81	Total A6	57
Quarry Road	62		
Bath Road	177	Walcot	2
Bradford Road	30	County Ground	2
Groveland Avenue	71	Croft Lawns	3
Oxford Gardens	10	Kingshill & Okus	2
Penfold Gardens	15	Queens Park	3
Quarry Mews	8	Parks	2
Springfield Road	70		
The Shearings	9		14
Total A5	777		

Appendix Two

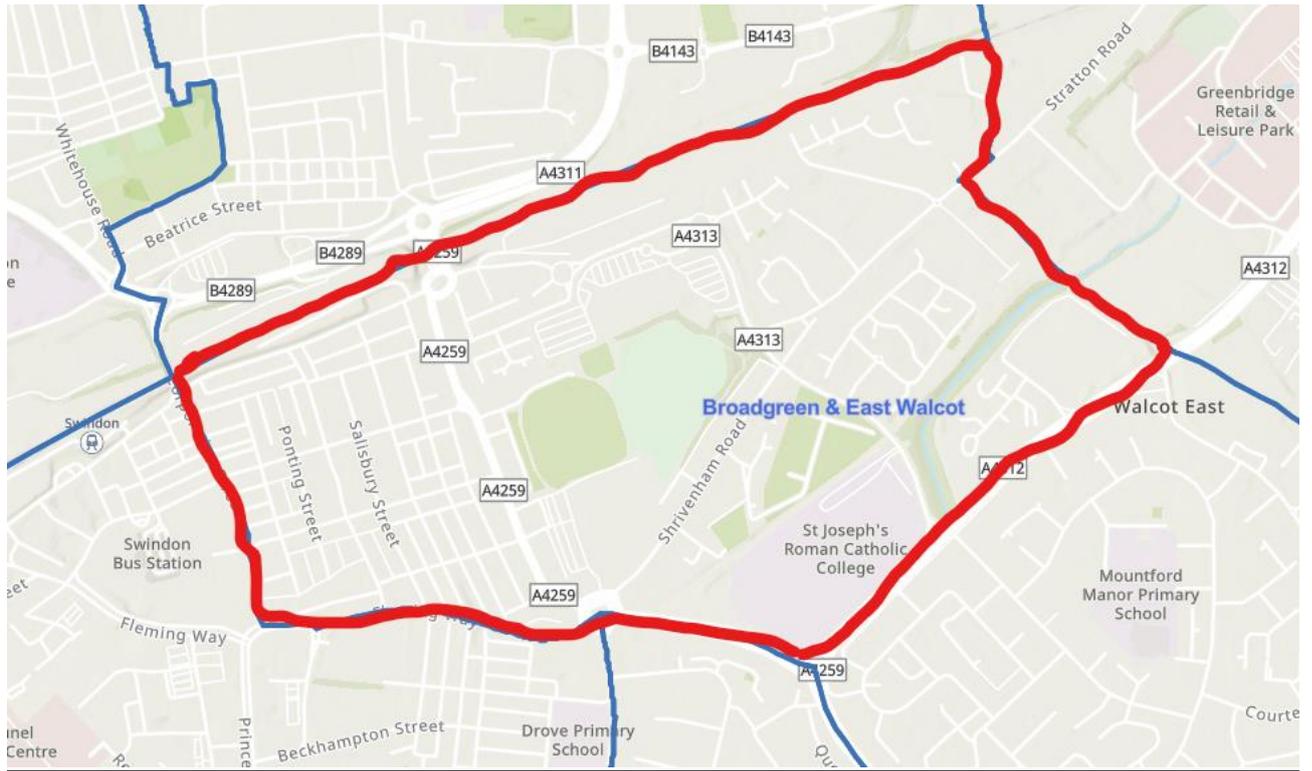
Proposed Kingshill & Westcott Ward Map



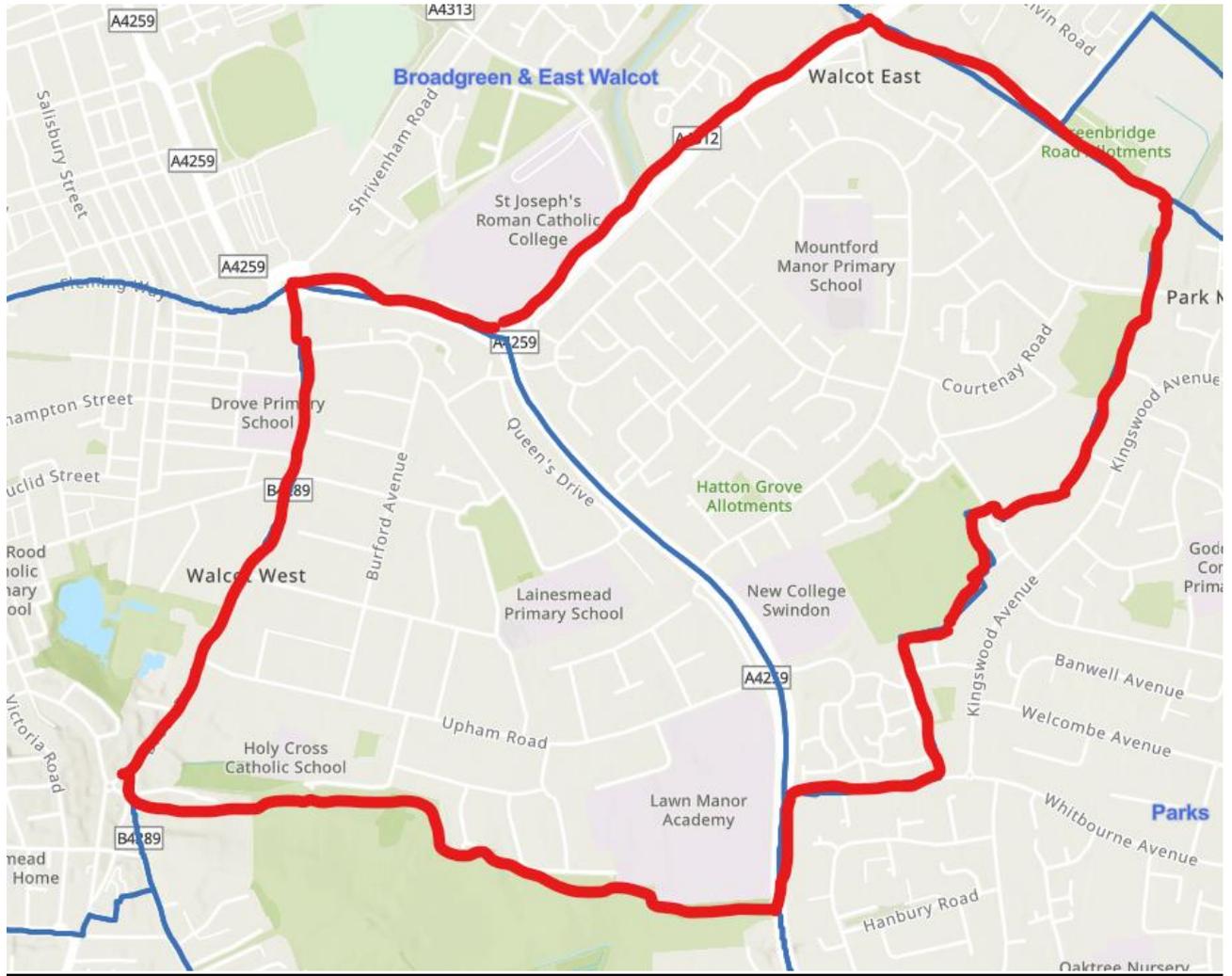
Proposed Queens Park Ward Map



Proposed County Ground Ward Map



Proposed Walcot Ward



Croft & Lawn Ward Map

