

# Bristol

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## Comment text:

**Related subject:** I represent the current ward of Hotwells & Harbourside.

I attach a written submission in pdf format below. Please contact me at my provided email address if there are any issues with this.

## Attached Documents:

- bristol-boundary-review-submission-2026---councillor-submission.pdf

## **Bristol Boundary Review 2026 – Local Councillor Submission**

*Cllr Patrick McAllister*

### **1. Introduction**

- (a) I am Councillor Patrick McAllister. I currently represent Hotwells & Harbourside ward on Bristol City Council and have done so for the past three years. Based on my experience of representing the area, I have prepared this document with suggestions of how the ward boundaries could be altered in order to ensure community identities are respected while maintaining workable local government arrangements.
- (b) I believe it is essential that the unique character and geography of the Harbourside is reflected in Bristol's future ward boundaries. The New Cut, the Clifton Hills and the city centre form intuitive natural borders of a future ward, which should continue to treat the Floating Harbour as its heart and not a dividing border.
- (c) While I personally am philosophically attracted to two-member wards, I do not see any potential boundaries which would enable the region to be covered by a two-member ward while retaining this essential quality, based on current population distribution. Therefore I believe that Hotwells & Harbourside's "successor ward" should continue to be a one-member ward, as the uniquely strong physical geography of the area presents a special case.
- (d) Hotwells & Harbourside is currently composed of four polling districts. Very roughly, polling district HOHA is formed by the loop of Jacob's Wells Road, Park Street and Deanery Road incorporating Brandon Hill park and abutting the Clifton Triangle. HOHB comprises most of Hotwell Road and the housing to its immediate north and southern fringe, as well as the western end of Spike Island. HOHC is predominantly newer-build blocks of flats in the Canon's Marsh area. HOHD takes up the middle portion of Spike Island.
- (e) I believe that much of this current arrangement serves the area well. However there are certain issues that I believe would be addressed by alterations to the existing boundaries.

### **2. Proposed Alterations**

#### **2.1 Spike Island**

- (a) The eastern end of Spike Island, including Wapping Wharf up to the Bathurst Basin, is currently a strange case. It is currently part of the CENF polling district; the other part of CENF comprises the area around Queen Square, which is firmly city centre in culture and geography). It is not within Hotwells & Harbourside at all despite the clear commonalities between the famous M Shed museum in this area and the other cultural museums and organisations further to the west, such as the SS Great Britain or Spike Island arts centre. The popular walking trails along the northern edge of Spike Island and the Chocolate Path take in all of these attractions yet are bisected by the ward boundary.
- (b) While this boundary may have made more sense in the past, development over the last several years has eroded any physical border between the Hotwells & Harbourside and Central wards in this location, making the ward discontinuity confusing for Council officers and local residents; I regularly receive emails from both which mistakenly assume that I am the councillor for the area.
- (c) Additionally, including just this eastern tip of Spike Island within Central ward, when it is only accessible from the rest of that ward by bridges as opposed to the "land border" with Hotwells & Harbourside, has always seemed strange to me. Certainly, the complete bisection of Spike

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Island between wards does not seem to make geographical sense. This area of Spike Island currently within Central ward has far more in common with Hotwells & Harbourside in terms of land use, demographics, geography and culture (particularly HOHD but also HOHC and HOHB given the continuing development at Wapping Wharf) than it does with other areas of Central ward such as Stokes Croft or Whiteladies Road.

- (d) Bathurst Basin represents an intuitive boundary between Hotwells & Harbourside's successor ward and a Central successor ward. The basin itself would probably be best served by remaining within the Central successor, as the pontoon moorings within it are accessed from the Lower Guinea Street car park and not from Spike Island.
- (e) Therefore I would recommend that the present boundaries of Hotwells & Harbourside expand to include the remaining portion of Spike Island that is currently part of Central Ward.

### 2.2 Polling District A and Environs

- (a) The majority of the HOHA polling district has often felt very disconnected from the other three polling districts of Hotwells & Harbourside. Part of this is geographical – most of the ward is quite flat but HOHA rises up with Brandon Hill. The distance between it and the waterfront is also at play – most of Hotwells & Harbourside is close to the water and this influences the ward's culture and leisure offerings, but Park Street, Queen's Road, and Triangle South are all very "city centre" in their feel. Overall, most of HOHA has far greater connectivity with Central ward across Park Street or the Triangle than with Canon's Marsh and the Harbour to the south.
- (b) These streets are some of the main foci of student life in Bristol and there is a far greater commonality between these areas and the student-heavy areas to the north and east than the generally more settled populations southward in the rest of Hotwells & Harbourside.
- (c) Putting aside the artificial polling district boundaries, it is somewhat subjective to determine where the cultural boundary between "harbourside" and "city centre/Clifton" falls around this area. I believe the logical ward boundary with the current Brandon Hill area follows St George's Road from the Jacob's Wells roundabout, follows its northeastern turn at its intersection with Deanery Road, and then follows Frog Lane until it hits Park Street at the underpass. The ward boundary would then go south down College Green much as it already does. My reasoning for this change is laid out below.
- (d) The Brandon Hill park should stay within one polling district/ward as much as possible, pushing potential borders to at least the park's edges. Queen's Parade and Brandon Steep are streets defined by their relationship with the park, so should remain with it. However the residential streets to the north and east of Brandon Hill Park are much more in keeping with Park Street and what is now Central or Clifton wards. Therefore it would make sense to move this whole area into one of those wards. A perhaps sole exception to this might be to move John Carr's Terrace into Clifton, which it currently faces across the road.
- (e) Conversely, St George's Road and Deanery Road are much more defined by their proximity to the Harbourside area, which is reflected in their architecture and forming the edge of the Canons Marsh region within the current Harbour Place Shaping Strategy ([page 4](#)). The proposed boundary avoids a straight boundary along St George's Road eastwards from the roundabout and continuing down Deanery Road, to prevent splitting the Deanery Road flats (which are one development) between wards.

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- (f) Choosing to continue the boundary to meet Park Street at Frog Land instead of St George's Road ensures that all of Park Street's ground floor retail is contained within one ward (probably the Central ward successor), including the famous nightclub OMG which has cultural links with the Triangle to the north and venues like Queenshilling across the road.
- (g) It would make sense for the boundary to not be along the actual road but set back behind the buildings, so that buildings with frontages onto St George's Road are part of Hotwells & Harbourside's successor ward. For this reason I would also suggest moving St Peter's House from Clifton ward into Hotwells & Harbourside's successor and particularly ensuring that the residential/retail crescent from 20 Jacob's Wells Road to 107 St George's Road remains within the Hotwells & Harbourside successor ward instead of being moved with the Brandon Hill region. These areas are very firmly Harbourside in their location, aspect and culture.
- (h) Some nuance may be needed regarding Jacob's Court, which has main entrances on both St George's Road and Queen's Parade; this will also impact the allocation of York Place. St George's House, meanwhile, has its residential entrances on Queen's Parade despite its commercial frontage on St George's Road.
- (i) This change would keep the Canon's Marsh region intact and within the "Harbourside ward", while moving the Brandon Hill region – not part of the Harbour area of the city – into a region it shares greater commonality with.

### 2.3 Hotwells

- (a) The current northern boundary of HOHB makes a large amount of sense and it would be good to mostly retain this. The Clifton hill presents a geographical boundary and streets just one north of Hotwell Road (such as Ambrose Road and Cliftonwood Terrace) are very firmly culturally part of Clifton and not Hotwells & Harbourside. The social identities of these areas are very distinct and mixing them would inevitably lead to one or the other being overlooked to an extent.
- (b) Where I would propose changes to this boundary would be west of the intersection between Hotwell Road and Ambra Vale. Holy Trinity Church, the Hillsborough Flats (including the block at the south end of Clifton Vale, but not extending so far as to encompass the separate Clifton Vale Close development to the north which is very much in the Clifton region) and Dowry Square all face south onto Hotwell Road – I believe it would be sensible to include these within Hotwells & Harbourside's successor ward.
- (c) At the other extreme, the row of houses from 372-420 Hotwell Road are currently in Clifton but are south facing at the base of a cliff with no direct road access to the rest of Clifton. Moving this row into Hotwells & Harbourside's successor ward would be logical
- (d) That leaves an open question over the region between these two areas, which is roughly bounded by Hope Chapel Hill, Victoria Terrace and Hotwell Road to the south and east. This area is undoubtedly part of the Hotwells region of the city (noting the presence of Hotwells Primary School where many residents of Hotwells & Harbourside send their children and which is in the same academy trust as Cathedral Primary School – it was recently proposed that the schools merge) and the area's connectivity is largely via Hotwell Road.
- (e) I suggest that the northern stretch of Granby Hill, the northern side of Victoria Terrace, and Windsor Terrace should remain part of Clifton ward('s successor) as they are very much part of Clifton culturally and socially – this is evident even from their architecture – and they have stronger connectivity north into Clifton.

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- (f) Conversely, roads to the north of Hope Chapel Hill such as North Green Street and Hope Square (the flats to the western edge of Hope Square open onto the northern half of Granby Hill and should remain in Clifton), have a primary connectivity of eastwards onto Hope Chapel Hill and Hotwell Road; it would therefore make sense for them to form part of Hotwells & Harbourside's successor ward.
- (g) I would suggest that a new ward boundary in this part of the city would follow Hope Chapel Hill up from its intersection with Hotwell Road, including the roads that come off from this street to the north, then move south across Granby Road to follow Hinton Lane down onto Hotwell Road again to incorporate the final stretch of houses at 372-420 Hotwell Road.

### **3. Other Configurations**

- (a) There are a number of other configurations of ward boundaries which may be considered as part of this process. I would like to address a number of them and outline why I feel they are not suitable.

#### **3.1 Joining Spike Island with South Bristol**

- (a) Spike Island is connected by a number of bridges with Southville, south of the New Cut; it may seem that it has just as much claim to be part of Southville's successor as Hotwells & Harbourside's.
- (b) However, South Bristol has a distinct culture which is not shared by Spike Island, and the New Cut is universally regarded as the border between North and South Bristol.
- (c) Keeping both sides of the Floating Harbour between Spike Island and Hotwells/Canon's Marsh within one ward means more cohesive oversight and representation of the unique interests of this part of the Harbour. It is important to treat the Floating Harbour between Howell Road/Canon's Marsh and Spike Island as the heart of any future ward, not as a boundary. Connections across the Harbour are extremely important for the city's conception of itself, while the New Cut is widely acknowledged as a natural border (as noted above).
- (d) This proposal would also entail ward and parliamentary constituency boundaries crossing; I understand that while this is permitted, I believe it would also create confusion and logistical challenges.

#### **3.2 Merging Hotwells & Harbourside with Central Ward**

- (a) Prior to the 2016 local elections, the area roughly comprising Hotwells & Harbourside and Central wards was represented by one ward, Cabot. I do not believe that returning to a similar arrangement would be in keeping with the aims of the boundary review to ensure effective and convenience local government or protect community interests and identities.
- (b) While there is some blurring around the current ward borders as noted above, Central and Hotwells & Harbourside have very different geographies, demographics and cultures. As noted above, there is no geographic or cultural connection between Broadmead, Stokes Croft or Whiteladies Road and Wapping Wharf – currently within Central ward – let alone with Baltic Wharf or Rownham Mead in Hotwells & Harbourside.
- (c) Such an elongated ward would comprise far too many geographical, demographic and cultural differences for adequate representation – I would worry that the unique culture and needs of Bristol Harbour could suffer from lack of dedicated representation. While Central ward as it

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stands now does contain parts of Bristol Harbour, even here there are cultural and geographical differences – the Harbour east of Prince Street Bridge becomes generally narrower and more confined, less suited for events and with fewer on-water inhabitants, while the waterfront land uses have less connection with the Harbour.

- (d) This roughly correlates with the boundary between the relevant conservation areas, City Docks and Redcliffe; the latter is focused on the city centre while the former is focused on the Harbour. This distinction is noted in the Harbour Place Shaping Strategy, which notes that *“the distinct Conservation Areas and character areas within them provide a nuanced, place-specific framework for considering heritage value and significance across the study area”* ([page 15](#)).

### 3.3 Including More of Clifton

- (a) Moving the current HOHB boundary north to include more of present-day Clifton ward is another possibility, and one which would open up the possibility of a large enough population for a two-member ward. However for reasons already touched on, this would not be a suitable solution for representing community interests or providing convenience local government.
- (b) Clifton (as a region, not a ward) has a very distinct culture and environment compared to much of the rest of Bristol – it is generally more affluent and more settled, with more “old money”. The social centre of Clifton is around Princess Victoria Street and Clifton Village to the north, far removed both geographically and culturally from the waterfront. Splitting this area up (in section 2.3 above, I was careful to respect the distinction between Clifton and Hotwells) would do a disservice to it; merging it with the waterfront region would do a disservice to the Harbourside.
- (c) Clifton Hill represents a geographical boundary as well – much of Clifton is up a steep slope from Hotwells and the Harbourside which further limits connectivity. This influence is part of the reason why while Hotwell Road is very firmly part of the Harbourside, streets just one to the north of it are not.

### 3.4 Retaining more of HOHA

- (a) For the reasons stated in section 2.2 above, I do not believe that keeping the residential portions of most of the HOHA polling district within Hotwells & Harbourside’s successor ward would be in the interests of upholding community identities.

### 3.5 Including Land to the West of Prince Street

- (a) It was suggested to me that if the eastern end of Spike Island would be included in Hotwells & Harbourside’s successor ward, it may make sense for the ward boundary to in fact encompass Prince Street Bridge, then follow Prince Street north until it rejoins the current ward boundary coming down from College Green. This would encompass more of the City Docks region of the Harbour into one ward by encompassing the waterfront along Narrow Quay and ensure a continuous connection to the “mainland”.
- (b) I feel that this would compromise the integrity of the Queen Square region, which is firmly city centre, and risk muddling ward boundaries and causing confusion by overriding the strong natural geographical boundaries in the area. If a version of this was to happen, I believe setting the boundary along Narrow Quay to solely include the waterfront would be preferable.

**4. Conclusion**

- (a) I believe that creating a successor ward to Hotwells & Harbourside which includes part of Hotwells, all of Spike Island but does not include most of what is now the HOHA polling district would deliver a cohesive and effective one-member ward. It would prioritise representation of waterfront communities and the land uses that characterise this area of Bristol Harbour – the characteristic mix of residential, museums and performance spaces, industrial heritage and waterborne activities.
- (b) The inclusion of more of the Hotwells region would help keep that area’s interests from being overlooked by the wealthier Clifton region up the hill to the north. Putting all of Spike Island within one ward would increase the effective representation of the Island’s shared interests without dilution from divided attention with other areas of the city centre. Moving the non-Harbourside section of HOHA into more appropriate city centre or Clifton successor wards would better respect the local community’s needs in that region and local topography, while ensuring the cohesiveness of Brandon Hill park.
- (c) It is fundamental that the stretch of the Floating Harbour from east of Prince Street Bridge is treated as a heartland and not a border. For the interests of the Harbour community and for ensuring joined-up and well-informed local representation (particularly on matters such as development) it is important that both banks of this part of the Harbour stay contained within the same ward.
- (d) For ease, I have created a rough illustration of the current Hotwells & Harbourside ward boundaries, with my suggested alterations and proposed successor ward, accessible at: [https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1eMd\\_Vm39atYh2D8II7BQoQK\\_ZdnPKBI&usp=sharing](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1eMd_Vm39atYh2D8II7BQoQK_ZdnPKBI&usp=sharing).
- (e) Thank you for your consideration of my submission. If you would like to contact me to discuss this or other matters further, I am reachable at [cllr.patrick.mcallister@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.patrick.mcallister@bristol.gov.uk).