

## **Report of Cllr Steve Stuart**

*Borough Councillor for Water Orton – North Warwickshire Borough Councillor.*

To Water Orton Parish Council. 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

### **Boundary Changes**

Following the consultation for boundary changes a set of proposals went in front of an extraordinary meeting of NWBC. The section relating to Water Orton highlighted the following:

We propose to retain the current 2-member ward of Water Orton. With a projected electorate of 2807 in 2030, this proposed ward is an appropriate size in terms of ensuring equality of representation.

Like Kingsbury to the North, Our proposed ward of Water Orton is in a geographically unique location, being separated from Coleshill to the East by the M6 toll road, to the West by the Borough Boundary and to the South (currently) by the M6 and in future, the “Delta Junction” of the HS2 line between Birmingham and London. These hard-geographical boundaries do isolate the village of Water Orton from the surrounding parts of North Warwickshire, and give the village its own identity and also lead to particular local issues that the 2 councillors for the proposed Ward will need to address. Whilst the proposed ward electorate is on the lower side, being -6% below the ideal ward size, in terms of communities of identity and the effectiveness of councillors representing this area, it is considered appropriate to maintain the current ward boundaries.

I voted in favour of the proposal which now goes back to the boundary commission for approval.

### **Local Government Reorganisation**

It has been reported in the press that the government proposes a reorganisation of Local Government with a view to removing all two-tier local authorities. Such a proposal would remove both North Warwickshire Borough Council (together with the other 4 borough or district councils) and Warwickshire Country Council and replace them with a unitary authority.

What this would look like is still very much open to discussion and debate. A working party is being set up at NWBC and I will be allocated a place as a “group leader”.

An application has been made by WCC to postpone the elections due in May 2025. A decision is due shortly from central government.

### **HS2 Commissioner**

Cllr Martin Watson arranged for a visit to the area by Sir Mark Worthington, Independent Complaints Commissioner for HS2. Martin accompanied Sir Mark to a number of sites across his County Council Ward. I joined the Water Orton leg of the visit along Attleboro Lane where we were also joined by Rachel Taylor MP and her new office manager, Satvir Dosanjh.

I spoke to Sir Mark and detailed to him the that challenge that I would receive subsequent to his visit would be “so what?”. I have asked that he would write to Cllr Watson and Rachel Taylor MP detailing the issues which he had seen and that he saw I’d receive a copy of said letter.

I requested that prior to leaving the village that Sir Mark was taken along the Birmingham Road so that he could see the extent of the buildings that had been constructed as part of the tunnelling works.

Sir Mark later attended a meeting with the SMZ, I did not attend this meeting feeling that it would be more powerful if the points which I had raised were replicated by others independently.

### **SMZ – Smell**

Just prior to Christmas BBV detailed that they were, after further investigations, responsible for the smell which has been pervading the village. There is some uncertainty why the smell seems to dissipate at certain times or the actually reasoning behind the smell, purely that it is likely to be emanating from the spoil evacuated from the tunnel.

Given then uncertainty of the exact cause mitigation is more problematic. BBV detail they are liaising with Environmental Health at NWBC. I have made representations to the CEO at NWBC to have an update from the relevant Env Health officer.

### **SMZ – Staffing Changes**

At SMZ in January HS2 / BBV detailed a reduction in the number of staff involved in community engagement. This may result in some delays in the responsiveness of staff. It has been detailed that calls to the contact centre would be unaffected.

Concerns have been raised as to the potential impact of these changes, but it will be a matter of monitoring to see what the impact, if any, is.

### **SMZ -Graffiti**

At SMZ HS2 / BBV detailed that their plan for anti-graffiti measures on the assets around the village was to overpaint. Concerns have been raised that the paint will age, weather and colour differently to the concrete and therefore could lead to a patchy aesthetic.

It had been noted that assets near to the centre of Birmingham will be treated with anti-graffiti treatments as these were deemed to be of comparative high risk. I have made the argument that whilst Water Orton may not have as much graffiti as central Birmingham there are remarkably few sites which could be graffitied which aren’t. Quoted the pedestrian bridge over the railway line on the footpaths to the north of Salisbury Drive as well as the motorway bridges and Birmingham Road Car Park.

A request has been made as to the evaluation criteria for anti-graffiti treatment.

### **Housing Development – Adjacent to Dog Inn.**

The NWBC street naming and numbering team made an approach asking whether there was any objection to the name “Market Gardens” being given to the road acting as the spine for the new development on the land adjacent to the Dog.

I detailed that whilst I had no objections, I wasn’t particularly keen on the name and suggested that Warren Close, Warren Grove or, if they were set on the suffix Gardens, Warren Gardens. This was as a recognition for the work undertaken in the village by John Warren.

The developers would like to proceed with “Warren Gardens” and this looks likely to be the name after agreement from John’s family has been secured.

### **Car Parking**

I have requested usage and fine data from NWBC to the Birmingham Road Car Park with a view to seeing if the parking charges and scheme can be reviewed.

Steve Stuart

23.01.25