

Wolverhampton City Council

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Organisation Name:

Comment text:

I am responding to oppose the proposal to move properties on Coalway Road from the Penn Ward to the Graiseley Ward. There is an absence of clear evidence to substantiate how this element of their proposals meet the stated aims of electoral equality, maintenance of community identity and supporting effective local governance. Before addressing those points I note the substandard efforts on the part of the Council to proactively draw residents attention to these contentious proposals. This undermines the process of public consultation and casts doubt on the commitment to effective local governance which should first and foremost be seeking to operate transparently and with popular consent. The Penn Ward's current and projected average number of electors per Councillor meets the LGBCE's own definition for 'good electoral equality'. The first stated aim of the consultation is therefore met without the need for changes to the current boundary. Furthermore, it is not clear how reliable the council's projections are given the unprecedented social disruption from the Covid-19 pandemic which cannot yet be fully understood. The reliability of projections is undermined given the council has already had cause to amend these projections since this process commenced. Coalway Road is a busy thoroughfare and currently provides a natural boundary between the Penn and Graiseley wards. Little justification has been provided for the proposed arbitrary boundary change. The only reason provided in the council's material is that houses on both the North and South side of Coalway Road are similar in character. Even if this assertion is considered correct (which is disputable) that only addresses the common identity of the immediate boundary. It does not address the substantive point which is whether the properties proposed to be moved share a community identity with the Graiseley Ward. I do not consider they do, and would point to the Wolverhampton Labour Party's own descriptions of the Penn and Graiseley wards on their website or data held by the council for evidence of the clear differences between the character of the respective wards. The amendments to the boundary appear to be arbitrary in nature and give little regard to the effect of the change on residents including the detachment of parishioners to their places of worship. At present my family enjoy utilising the shops, parks, local pubs/restaurants, services and doctors which help make up the character and community of the Penn ward. It is distressing to think we can be unilaterally detached from this ward without objective evidence which identifies either electoral inequality (under the LGBCE definition), how community identity concerns have been considered or how the current ward boundary is undermining the effectiveness of local governance. It is only fair and proportionate that the onus should be on those proposing changes to the current boundaries to evidence how the proposals serve the stated aims whilst mitigating the adverse impact on residents. In relation to the amendments impacting Coalway Road they have failed to do so. Given that I would urge decision makers to rethink these proposals and maintain Coalway Road as a clearly identifiable boundary with existing properties kept within the Penn Ward.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded