

Sunderland

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Comment text:

Dear Commissioners,

I have formally submitted my political group's collective response but wish to also offer this feedback as a resident of the city, in an individual capacity.

- Using the footpath of Barnes Park as a boundary will cause governance issues. This will mean that the future Tunstall and Humbledon Ward councillor will have 1.5 parks to maintain using their ward budgets and will lead to conflict between these councillors and those who cover Barnes and Thornhill Ward. For example, licencing officers ask for councillors to sign off proposed events in the park - and what the Commission is proposing would double the number of consultees during that process, which would represent more complex local governance arrangements, not simple or straightforward ones. I endorse my group's proposal that the boundary should be the centre of Ettrick Grove and the centre of Durham Road as this are clear, easily identifiable and easily communicated boundaries. It will be easy to explain to others that the boundary is the middle of the road, rather than the back of a property not visible from a public street. The Lib Dem proposal to use the back of houses has been discussed in the Council's working group and has not been argued well by those proposing it. Their argument is that the houses on Ettrick Grove are technically Humbledon and therefore belong in the Tunstall and Humbledon Ward: yet these houses currently sit within a ward called Barnes, some of the houses are literally set within the grounds of the park and, should the Lib Dem proposal be accepted, it would place these Ettrick Grove residents in a different ward to the rest of Ettrick Grove. Similarly the houses on Durham Road we propose putting in the Barnes and Thornhill Ward are not strictly 'Humbledon'. It is the houses on the southern part of Durham Road that are called 'Humbledon Park'. The houses impacted by our proposal are simply 'Durham Road' and - again - these back onto Barnes Park. There would be no cultural or community-based

reason why they could remain (as they are now) in a Barnes Ward.

- There is consensus among the Conservative, Lib Dem and Labour council groups that the Commission's proposals in respect of Hollycarrside are not acceptable. I urge the Commission to come and visit Hollycarrside to understand why the proposed boundary does not make sense: namely, these houses are raised above the level of the road that runs to their east. They are distinctive and clearly part of a single community. To give this area two sets of councillors would not reflect natural community borders, nor would it support effective local governance - because the Ryhope Ward councillors would be responsible for a slither of this land. Where the consensus ends is how to solve this issue. I support the proposal that all of Hollycarrside should be in the proposed Grangetown Ward for two reasons. The first is that it is the least disruptive option. All of Hollycarrside can be moved into the Grangetown Ward (and I propose it should therefore be named Grangetown and Hollycarrside Ward) without it moving either ward outside of the +/-10% threshold in terms of elector numbers. By my calculations, putting it into the Ryhope Ward in its entirety leaves both the Grangetown Ward short of electors and makes the proposed Ryhope Ward far too big in terms of electors. This has a disruptive impact that means other wards around these then have to be modified. The second reason is that Hollycarrside is - in community terms - more like Grangetown than Ryhope. Grangetown is easily accessible on foot, the local supermarket is Asda Grangetown, the houses literally face onto Grangetown but are separated from Ryhope by a large, open green space and a main road. I believe that Commissioners would agree with this if they visited the area.
- I strongly support the Conservative proposals in respect of Sainsbury's on Silksworth Lane. I walk past what the Commission proposes to use as the boundary on an almost daily basis and I genuinely cannot understand how the boundary that runs from Premier Road to the Sainsbury's site (over a large, open green space) could be identified by residents, councillors or council officers. It does not make for effective local governance to have a boundary that cannot be identified. If the Commission does not like our proposals in relation to the footpath and the northern boundary of the gym car park, then it might consider simply including all of Silksworth Sports Complex in Tunstall and Humbledon Ward and using Silksworth Lane and North Moor Lane as the boundaries (i.e. joining back up to the existing boundary on North Moor Lane).
- Finally, I strongly support all the Conservative proposals for name changes but I wish to comment on two in particular. The first is the 'Central Ward'. The Commission will know that the Conservatives proposed a city centre ward for reasons outlined in our first submission. This ward is - broadly - that proposal. As Sunderland undergoes economic regeneration to reinvent its city centre, with an emphasis on new housing and residential development there, I feel it would capture this new identity by naming the ward 'City Centre Ward'. Central is simply not appropriate because this is what we, as councillors, call Washington Central for ease of reference and the potential for confusion is significant. Second, I have concerns about the decision to use compass points for the Washington Ward names and I know the Lib Dems agree. Our members there have raised the very valid point that someone who lives in Washington South at the 2024 local elections will - despite no change in geography - suddenly become an elector in Washington West at the 2026 local elections. Trying to explain to electors, especially in the 2024-26 period, that they currently live in South but will soon live in West makes a mockery of these compass points overall, but also has the potential to cause mass confusion. It would make for bad local governance if residents contact the wrong councillors in error. That aside, Washington is not simply a series of compass points - it has distinct local communities and their names are better descriptions of the wards than compass points. It is notable though that one 'Washington' ward is actually - and contrary to the Conservatives' proposals - actually a ward made up of Washington and Houghton, with NE and DL postcodes. It is vital that this ward has a name which reflects that it is two distinct areas and I think Riverside Ward does this.

Dr Antony Mullen

Attached Documents:

None attached