

# Newcastle upon Tyne

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## Comment text:

**Related subject:** Kingston Park South and Newbiggin Hall Ward

I have lived for almost 70 years in the west end of Newcastle upon Tyne, over 40 of them as a resident of Tudor Grange, which forms part of the “Kingston Park South” section of the city’s Newbiggin Hall and Kingston Park South ward. This lifetime, and having been a career geographer, have made me well-placed to offer the following in support of the review of the boundaries of this ward in Newcastle upon Tyne.

This review provides a golden opportunity to correct the major shortcomings of the present arrangement that unwisely created the ward of Kingston Park South and Newbiggin Hall. This made Tudor Grange and parts of Kingston Park, private housing estates to the east of the A69 Woolsington Bypass, part of the same ward as Newbiggin Hall, an estate largely comprised of council houses that lies on the west side of the bypass, even though there were few, if any, existing ties between the communities, with none to the best of my knowledge and understanding having subsequently developed to change this situation. These differences exist because of the different eras in which the housing estates were constructed and the resulting infrastructure that was built and developed to serve these separate communities, and the socio-economic makeup of their respective populations.

Newbiggin Hall was constructed in the 1960s primarily for the rehoming of residents from areas of life-expired inner city 19th and early 20th century housing. Stamfordham Road, the B6324, radiates in a north-westerly direction from the city centre, and is the main road serving the Newbiggin Hall. It gives direct access to the city centre, e.g. via the 71 and 72 bus services, without going anywhere near Kingston Park and Tudor Grange. Stamfordham Road also provides a well-developed shopping centre that is easily reached by Newbiggin Hall’s residents but is some two miles distant from Kingston Park South. Shops such as Aldi exist at both locations, making little need for the residents of one area to

travel to the other.

Conversely, Kingston Park, Tudor Grange and Stuart Court housing estates were developed 20-25 years later at a time of urban population growth caused largely by the families of the baby boom generation reaching maturity, and were heavily marketed by their builder, Leech Homes (North East) Ltd., towards families with sufficient disposable income to buy their own homes. The first of the two key routes linking these estates to the city centre is Ponteland Road, formerly the A696, now reclassified as the B6918, which heads in a NNW direction to/from the city centre. This main road also connects the great many new houses at Kenton Bank Foot with Kingston Park and Tudor Grange, and helps to make these part of a cohesive unit. Ponteland Road does not link Kingston Park / Stuart Court / Tudor Grange with Newbiggin Hall.

The second main route that links Kingston Park with the city centre is Brunton Lane, a north-south route that diverges from Ponteland Road. There was already a significant volume of 1970s and 1980s housing in Kingston Park that is served by this road, again without any links to Newbiggin Hall, but north-south traffic volumes on the road have greatly increased recently by the construction of thousands of new houses along it and in quite close proximity in the direction of Dinnington, forming a far more cohesive unit than with Newbiggin Hall.

Brunton Lane and Ponteland Road are key parts of the route of the X47 bus service that links Kingston Park, Stuart Court and Tudor Grange with the city centre, but this service does not pass through or near Newbiggin Hall.

The Woolsington Bypass dual carriageway, the current A696, completely separates Newbiggin Hall from Tudor Grange and Kingston Park, by forming a man-made barrier through the agricultural land that lies between them.

Newbiggin Lane does run from Newbiggin Hall to Kingston Park via Kenton Bank Foot but requires a journey of some two miles to travel from e.g. Trevelyan Drive in Newbiggin Hall to the shops at Kingston Park. It is served by the 342 bus service, which, despite any claims to the contrary by the Newbiggin Hall-based councillors is hardly used by the residents of Newbiggin Hall to travel to/from Kingston Park. As one of the local dog walkers, I see the 342 buses numerous times every day, which often run empty between Kingston Park shops and Newbiggin Hall, and even at the busiest times, rarely carry more than two passengers, (which is approximately just a 6% loading for each bus) further emphasising the lack of community ties between Newbiggin Hall and Tudor Grange/Kingston Park and the separate identities of these respective communities.

The Woolsington Bypass, the current A 696, was built as part of the strategic plan to improve travel between Tyneside and south Northumberland, on some of the farm land that already divided Newbiggin Hall from Kingston Park, Stuart Court and Tudor Grange. However, Meadow Rise housing estate is on the same side of the A696 as Newbiggin Hall with direct road and footpath access between the two, so should form a natural part of the ward the includes Newbiggin Hall.

Just one link was built between Newbiggin Hall and Tudor Grange in the form of a now-dingy pedestrian tunnel beneath the bypass. Many of Tudor Grange's residents avoid the underpass when it is dark due to the feelings of insecurity that it creates in them, especially as the path only

goes behind the back gardens, out of the adjacent residents' sight. Their reluctance is further reinforced by the unreliable maintenance of the street lights along the footpath on the Tudor Grange side of the bypass, a good number of which I have had to report as being repeatedly defective, with some lights not having worked for over four months now despite my repeated requests via the city council's online reporting system requesting their repair. Tudor Grange residents are also deterred from using this path due to its repeated misuse by motorbike and quad bike riders from Newbiggin Hall who drive unlit at high speed up and down the pathway, usually in the dark, as well as the recent burning down of a homeless person's tent close to the bypass on its Newbiggin Hall side.

The recent construction and opening of the shopping centre in Newbiggin Hall provided a new retail hub for that part of the ward. The new shops have refocussed the pattern of shopping for Newbiggin Hall Estate's residents away from journeys through Tudor Grange and Kingston Park to reach the shops at Kingston Park, as was more the case before the new shopping centre opened in Newbiggin Hall. This saving of time and reduction in travel costs for many of Newbiggin Hall's residents has significantly reduced or in some cases eliminated their need to travel the two miles or so to reach Kingston Park Shops, further reducing any ties between Newbiggin Hall and Kingston Park South.

The new shops in Newbiggin Hall have also been repeatedly and highly praised in the party political leaflets and newssheets issued to all ward residents by the wards' councillors, two of whom who live in Newbiggin Hall. The same documents over a period of several years were also used to bemoan the loss of Newbiggin Hall's previous shops and how this had seriously inconvenienced the estate's residents by making it necessary for them to travel so far to the shops at Kingston Park.

As they live within walking distance of the new shops, the two councillors have been well-placed to see at first-hand how these shops have become a boon to the local residents, a great many of whom now prefer to use these new shops in preference to those at Kingston Park.

The Gala Field park and sports pitches in Newbiggin Hall well serve the needs of the local residents, with a nursery school next door and other schools nearby, while there is a children's playground and two, large fields between Kingston Park Primary School and Brunton Lane, continuing as far east as the A1 Western Bypass. Organised games of football for the young people from the Kingston Park area used to take place on Saturdays on Kingston Park field, but these have now relocated to Kenton School, not Newbiggin Hall. Moreover, in my forty plus years of living in Tudor Grange, I cannot remember any events that caused people from either Newbiggin Hall or Kingston Park / Tudor Grange to use the other area's outdoor play facilities in any significant, let alone sustained manner.

The building of hundreds of new houses at Kenton Bank Foot, e.g. Woolsington Grange by Taylor Wimpey, has further strengthened the case for making Tudor Grange, Stuart Court and Kingston Park once more part of the same ward based on Kingston Park, and not Newbiggin Hall. Families from Kingston Park and Tudor Grange have moved into the new houses at Kenton Bank Foot, and so retain family links with the areas from where they moved. The residents of the new houses make extensive use of the shops at Kingston Park but I have not seen an increase in traffic between the new houses and the shops in Newbiggin Hall.

Finally, Kingston Park Primary School has recently undergone a multi-million pound extension to accommodate the children of families who have moved into Woolsington Grange but there has been no equivalent enlargement of the primary schools in Newbiggin Hall to accommodate extra children now living in Kenton Bank Foot. As such, the growth of Kingston Park Primary School and the resultant friendships between the pupils from its catchment area have created very strong ties between Woolsington Grange and Kingston Park, Stuart Court and Tudor Grange for generations of local people for many years to come, thus providing a first rate role model for the re-organisation of the local wards to bring Tudor Grange, Stuart Court and Kingston Park into one, homogenous ward under the banner of Kingston Park.

## **Attached Documents:**

*None attached*