

Cheshire East

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Organisation Name: (Parish or town councillor)

Comment text:

Related subject: Gawsworth -Macclesfield South -Sutton

Do not be bound by aligning cheshire east wards with parish and town boundaries. The borders of Gawsworth Parish were recently confirmed and residents in north Gawsworth overwhelmingly want to be part of Gawsworth Parish. This does not mean they also want to be part of Gawsworth CEC ward. They have much in common on CEC responsibilities with Macclesfield South.

From a Parish Councillor view it is highly beneficial to have regular input and contact with Macclesfield South councillors as well as the Gawsworth Ward councillor. Please keep the border between Gawsworth and Macclesfield South wards as it is currently.

Attached Documents:

None attached

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I attach evidence that argues that a) The border between Gawsworth Ward and Macclesfield South Ward should remain at the meeting of the urban and rural landscapes. I oppose any suggestion that residents from the Gawsworth Moss Parish ward be transferred to the very different 'Gawsworth' CEC ward. b) The name 'Gawsworth' does not meet ward naming guidelines. It causes significant confusion and is detrimental to local democracy. The ward name should be changed to a one that actually represents the area that it covers.

Attached Documents:

- cec-ward-boundary-review-pw.docx

Ward boundary changes - Gawsworth

Councillor Paul Woods

Gawsworth Parish Council

26th February 2024

These are my views as a Parish Councillor for Gawsworth Parish with respect to the initial consultation on the Cheshire East ward boundary review. I make particular reference the current 'Gawsworth Ward' and its border with the 'Macclesfield South' Ward. In summary, I support the border between the CEC wards of 'Gawsworth' and 'Macclesfield South' remaining at the easily distinguishable border between the rural landscape to the south and urban landscape to the north. In a CEC report prepared for council discussion it was stated that a decision is yet to be made on whether Gawsworth Macclesfield South ward should continue to include Gawsworth Parish Council's 'Gawsworth Moss' Parish ward. I submit that it should include the Gawsworth Moss Parish ward and I oppose the suggestion which has been expressed that residents from the northern, urban area of Gawsworth Parish might be moved into the large, rural 'Gawsworth' CEC ward. I also submit that the designation of 'Gawsworth' for the CEC ward is causing confusion and should be changed. I urge the Commission to consider ward naming as part of the review.

- 1. Explanation and Information.** I support the objective expressed by Professor Colin Mellors that the commission proposals should reflect communities and that they should be 'easy to understand and convenient for local people'. Extensive objective explanation will be necessary to achieve this where changes are made. The practical implications of any changes are difficult to grasp. At a recent Gawsworth Parish Council meeting parish councillors and the CEC Gawsworth ward councillor struggled to fully understand and explain all the practical implications of potential

changes in CEC ward borders. The clerk provided clear explanations which helped the council debate considerably but these explanations are not readily available to the public. The situation for Gawsworth Ward is extremely confusing as the Gawsworth Parish and Gawsworth CEC ward, inappropriately, have the same geographical designation. The commission and CEC should provide full, objective and clear information to aid the current consultation.

2. **Parish Council.** At its February meeting Gawsworth Parish Council did not support a resolution to urge that the Gawsworth Parish Moss Ward area be transferred from 'Macclesfield South' to 'Gawsworth' CEC ward. Rather it resolved not to comment on the boundary review at this stage. The Parish Council has, and continues, to place great emphasis on two-way communication with Gawsworth residents and strives to represent their views in local matters including interacting with Cheshire East Council. The Parish Council is without party political associations. It serves the interests of the Parish residents well that it has direct access to both the two councillors from Macclesfield South and the single Gawsworth ward CEC councillor who are inevitably of different political persuasions. The two CEC wards are fundamentally different in character, one urban and one rural, with different priorities with respect to CEC responsibilities. Residents' and the Parish Council's access to ward councillors with very different priorities is highly beneficial to local democracy and the work of the Parish Council to represent local residents' views.
3. **Ward naming - Gawsworth.** Naming the CEC ward 'Gawsworth' confuses and misleads and there is good reason for it to be renamed. Contrary to official guidance on ward naming 'Gawsworth' does not reflect the community it represents; it is not distinct and it does not clearly distinguish between levels of local government. I urge the commission to consider renaming 'Gawsworth' CEC ward to a description that reflects the community that it represents.

- a. Only around 60% of Gawsworth Parish residents are included in 'Gawsworth' CEC ward. This proportion will decrease further when LPS 15 is developed and approaching half of Gawsworth residents will not reside in 'Gawsworth CEC ward'.
- b. Less than a third of 'Gawsworth' CEC ward residents live in Gawsworth Parish. Even fewer live in Gawsworth settlement, which is what would be understood in Cheshire as 'Gawsworth'. The clear majority of 'Gawsworth' CEC ward residents do not actually live in Gawsworth but live in other settlements or in the broad rural hinterland. The great majority of residents in 'Gawsworth CEC ward' have little or no connection with Gawsworth.
- c. The geographical area covered by 'Gawsworth' CEC ward has no name or description that would be understood by anyone to represent it.
- d. Residents of other settlements will feel disenfranchised to be represented by a CEC councillor nominally representing another village some distance from them and to which they have no connection. Equally most Gawsworth residents would be surprised to know that their CEC 'Gawsworth' councillor actually represents many more residents outside Gawsworth than inside.
- e. Discussions on local matters which should distinguish 'Gawsworth CEC ward' from 'Gawsworth Parish' inevitably result in confusion over responsibilities. This has led to inappropriate criticism of the Parish Council over matters which were a CEC responsibility. The confusion diminishes trust in local democracy.
- f. 'Gawsworth' CEC ward should be renamed to better represent the rural area that it covers which is multiple villages, only one of which is Gawsworth, and the rural hinterland between Macclesfield and Congleton. The new name should be subject to local consultation. Considering precedent elsewhere I suggest that a better CEC ward name would combine the largest

settlements in the ward eg 'Gawsworth, Henbury and Lower Withington.' Alternatively, it could reflect the essentially rural nature of the ward eg 'East Cheshire Rural'.

4. **Parish wards.** Gawsworth Parish is divided into two wards. It would benefit Gawsworth residents if the Parish could be a single ward and would bring practical benefits to the operation of the Parish Council. Gawsworth Village Ward is in the CEC ward currently named 'Gawsworth' while Gawsworth Moss ward is in 'South Macclesfield' CEC ward. The current Gawsworth Parish ward division has been explained by wrongly asserting that because it spans two CEC wards there must be two Parish wards, with the border between them matching the CEC ward border. This is illogical and from my reading of government guidance is a false assertion. A single Parish ward would be consistent with the law since the number and distribution of electors would NOT make a single election of councillors impractical or inconvenient and it is NOT desirable for the northern area of Gawsworth to be separately represented. The Local Government Boundary Commission's guidance on community governance reviews (sections 158f) makes it clear that each situation must be considered on its merits and that multiple factors must be considered. The division into two Parish wards is not an absolute requirement when a Parish spans two higher level authority wards and the decision should be based on evidence gathered in the review. There was strong evidence from the last community governance review consultation which supports a single-ward Parish, but unfortunately that was not reflected in the final decisions. I realise that rectifying this anomaly in Parish warding is not the business of the commission's current work but I submit that the fact that the Parish is split provides no valid support for the argument that Gawsworth Moss Ward should be subsumed into the rural Gawsworth CEC ward in order to enable a single ward Parish. The evidence that the Gawsworth Parish Moss ward

residents overwhelmingly feel part of the Gawsworth Parish Community is absolutely not evidence that they associate or play any significant part in the much larger and very different Gawsworth CEC ward.

5. **Community.** Understanding community ties and identities is key at this stage of the commission's review.
 - a. The 'Gawsworth community' means the Gawsworth Parish Community and this is much stronger and fundamentally different from any 'Gawsworth' CEC ward community. In fact, there is little association between the villages that constitute the Gawsworth CEC Ward and in reality there is no 'Gawsworth CEC ward' community.
 - b. The thorough and extensive consultation in relation to the recent Community Governance Review showed that the residents of the Gawsworth Moss identify and continue to connect strongly with the village and Parish of Gawsworth. This is a community connection which is generations old. No such connection exists between Gawsworth Moss ward residents and the wide rural area represented by the 'Gawsworth' CEC ward. Gawsworth Moss residents volunteer at Gawsworth Community Hub, attend Gawsworth Primary School, attend our churches, volunteer for Parish Council working groups in our park and community woodland etc. etc. In contrast they have no connection with Siddington, Bosley, Henbury or any of the remainder of the so called 'Gawsworth CEC ward'.
 - c. Councillors representing urban areas will be well tuned to, and active on, the needs of an edge of town urban environment such as Gawsworth Moss. The effectiveness of CEC business would be diminished if their councillor represents an overwhelming majority of residents living in a rural environment and who use different services.
 - d. I do not believe there is any good community-based argument that would support a change in the current

division line between Macclesfield South and Gawsworth wards other than inclusion of the LPS 15 development site in Macclesfield site; assuming it actually goes ahead.

6. **Numbers.** The CEC report prepared for their submission to the commission identifies that retaining the Gawsworth Moss area in the Macclesfield South CEC ward would result in residents' numbers close to the desired average population numbers whereas moving it to a larger 'Gawsworth' CEC ward would result in numbers outside the the desired 10% variance. There is no valid reason for skewing the resident numbers outside recommendations.
7. **LPS15 development site.** The draft CEC report to the commission includes assertions with respect to Gawsworth that 4GDT1(LPS 15) Local Plan site is intended to meet (exclusively) Macclesfield's housing needs. Along with the established properties in 4BFR, it forms part of Gawsworth Parish Council's Gawsworth Moss parish ward. The commission should be aware that Gawsworth Parish Council is challenging CEC's assertion that, despite being well within Gawsworth Parish, LPS15 should not also meet Gawsworth Parishes' comparatively very small housing needs, as early consultation on the Local Plan described, and which it could easily do without compromising Macclesfield's needs. Conversely there is no justification for LPS15 to cater for housing needs in the rural hinterland and villages beyond Gawsworth Village which make up the so called 'Gawsworth' CEC ward.