

Solihull

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Comment text:

Poor old Castle Bromwich. What has it done to upset the Boundary Commission?

Last year despite an avalanche of objections from Castle Bromwich residents and the fact that Castle Bromwich had never had any ties geographically, culturally, or historically with Hodge Hill voters were informed that Castle Bromwich would be taken out of the constituency of Meriden and become part of the constituency of Hodge Hill. In the residents eyes the Boundary Commission seemed to ignore the criteria that they were supposed to take into account when making their decision . Now it is proposed that the Cars Area of Smiths Wood becomes part of the ward of Castle Bromwich. It is not for the benefit of Castle Bromwich or Smiths Wood residents as it is for electoral purposes but it will not encourage a greater turnout at local elections. I am sorry to say that a great many of the electorate in Castle Bromwich have become totally disillusioned and uninterested in politics nationally and locally since our constituency has changed and unfortunately will not bother to comment on these proposed ward boundary changes. Castle Bromwich has never had anything in common with Smiths Wood and never will have due to many factors.They are chalk and cheese as I hope the following information shows

1. Castle Bromwich is a large well established suburb of private 19th and 20th century housing,many with medium to large/ substantial gardens in the north of the borough of Solihull. Originally an agricultural area, Castle Bromwich first developed around Castle Bromwich Hall and St Mary and St Margaret's Church. It has some fine buildings in its conservation area which are grade 2 listed. The 1950s onwards saw an expansion of private house building in Castle Bromwich with many houses having medium to large size gardens. All have their own drives and garages which lead onto residential roads. There are some areas of social housing built in the early 1980s on the Parkfields Estate without drives and gardens although the flats and maisonettes are set in green areas. In contrast the Smiths Wood Cars Area was built on farmland and woodland as council

housing for rent in the late 1960s/early 1970s when it was known as Chelmsley Wood not Smiths Wood. The housing is dense in an area hemmed in by the A452, Lanchester Way and Green Lane with tiny or no gardens. Many dwellings can only be reached on foot by alley ways, any garages being in a block. Some of the houses are now privately owned.

2. Castle Bromwich has public green spaces as well as historic open parkland, two village greens, playing fields, a cricket pitch, a sports pavilion, tennis courts, a childrens playground and a war memorial where remembrance services for the fallen take place every November. It is served by three local churches. Castle Bromwich Hall is now a hotel and a popular wedding venue. There is also a Travel Lodge in the grounds of the Bradford Arms. Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens are renovated historic gardens and a successful tourist attraction and local amenity. There are also doctors surgeries and dental practices in the ward of Castle Bromwich. On the other hand the Cars Area of Smiths Wood area has access to a green space built alongside the M6 but little if any other open spaces or sports facilities or any amenities except for a pub. The schools, shops and medical facilities are in the regenerated part of Smiths Wood on the other side of Auckland Drive. The Green Group proposes Auckland Drive to be the new ward boundary line for Castle Bromwich. This will bisect the Smiths Wood ward as it is now, leaving the Cars Area on one side of the proposed boundary line and the rest of Smiths Wood in the regenerated area on the other.

3. Castle Bromwich has a very fine purpose- built village hall named Arden Hall which is the focus of local activities. It has meeting/committee rooms, function rooms with licensed bars and a large hall with a correspondingly sized stage where plays, concerts, and entertainments are held. Local organisations such as U3a , slimming groups, theatre groups, keep fit etc meet here regularly. Castle Bromwich Parish Council is also based at Arden Hall and has parish offices within the building. It is surrounded by well maintained playing fields. The Cars Area of Smiths Wood has a small community hall called Auckland Hall which houses the Trussell Trust foodbank and is used for small community activities.

4. The parish precept for Castle Bromwich is higher than the precept for Smiths Wood. This would mean the Cars Area of Smiths Wood having to pay this higher rate. This would not go down well in an area of deprivation and cause friction.

As you have read Castle Bromwich has nothing in common with the Cars Area of Smiths Wood historically, geographically or culturally . Their identities and interests as communities are poles apart. Castle Bromwich has a much older and more stable population than the Cars Area and having worked in this area of Smiths Wood in the past I know that there is more deprivation, social problems and crime related incidents than in the Castle Bromwich ward

I do not understand why the Green Group are recommending where the new ward boundaries should be. Why have they taken the lead in this and why have the original proposals by SMBC now seem to be disregarded in favour of ones put forward by a political party? It poses the question as to why the Green Group want to pass on the Cars Area to Castle Bromwich. Are they a drain financially? Do they have too many social problems? The Green Group who are recommending where the new boundary lines should be drawn want to split the ward of Smiths Wood using Auckland Drive as a boundary line. In effect this means that Cars Area will be removed from an area of Smiths Wood which is very close to them and with which they have a natural affinity and put into a ward one and a half to two plus miles away with which they share no

commonality at all. This will cause unnecessary problems to both wards which at the moment are cohesive and function well. The Green Group campaigned very effectively in Castle Bromwich several years ago and two Green candidates were elected to SMBC. Within 2 years both councillors resigned leaving one Conservative Councillor to cover the area. The Greens' reputation is somewhat sullied.

I would urge the Boundary Commission to revisit the ward boundary proposals in the light of my objections to them. In my opinion there is nothing that binds the two areas together and I can not understand how the council can carry out its responsibilities if Castle Bromwich becomes such a diverse ward. The needs of the two areas are so very different. Last year the Commission dealt a very severe blow to Castle Bromwich when they moved it into the constituency of Hodge Hill. Hodge Hill has many social and economic problems and it is the most deprived constituency in the country. I feel that by accepting the Green Group's proposals for the ward boundaries the Boundary Commission may damage Castle Bromwich so that the area loses more of its identity and deteriorates further.

I hope the Commission will seriously consider the contents of this email and will reject the idea of combining the Cars Area of Smiths Wood with the ward of Castle Bromwich.

Yours sincerely



Attached Documents:

None attached