North Somerset

Personal Details:

Name: Cllr David Robinson
Email: [redacted]
Postcode: [redacted]
Organisation Name: Wraxall & Failand Parish Council (Councillor)

Comment text:

Related subject: The Elms , Wraxall

I fully support the submissions made by Wraxall & Failand Parish Council and strongly believe that the Commission has neglected to place sufficient weight on the evidence from community engagement in assessing the identities and interests of local communities, a statutory criterion.

I have been a resident of the Elms estate for 28 years and before that I lived briefly in Nailsea and a member of our family has also lived in Nailsea. I volunteered to support the drafting of the Parish Plan in 2007, which was published in 2009, as did other residents of the Elms. I became a member of Wraxall & Failand Parish Council in 2010. Taking these factors into consideration, I submit that I am well-placed to advocate for the identity of the Elms. Residents of the Elms do place an importance on the historical boundaries and are keen to associate with Wraxall rather than Nailsea. Their overwhelming response in the Community Governance Review was to continue to remain with Wraxall & Failand and not join Nailsea.

Residents are asking me why the Commission appears to give little weight to the result of Community Governance Review when considering changing district ward boundaries and they believe that this disregard undermines local democracy. I have to agree and struggle to give an adequate explanation. Residents of the Elms were previously invited to respond to the Commission in 1998 and in 2014. On each occasion the majority of residents did not wish to be part of Nailsea or be represented by a district councillor other than one from Long Ashton, who have served them well. Whilst residents make use of the facilities in Nailsea, as do residents of the other surrounding villages, in my view they identify more strongly with Wraxall & Failand Parish Council and hence the Long Ashton ward than Nailsea and a ward associated with Nailsea.

I am confident that this is due to how past and present parish and district councillors have represented their views and concerns on local key issues, namely opposing development in the Green Belt, opposing strategic development that cannot be easily supported by the rural road network in the parish, and opposing the potential for new National Grid pylons taking power from Hinkley C to run through the parish.

Residents across the parish have strongly supported the Wraxall & Failand Neighbourhood Plan, which gives legal weight in the planning process to influencing any development in the parish. The strength of support reflects the involvement of residents on the Elms in their parish. Nailsea does not have a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Commission consider that the character of housing points to a stronger link with Nailsea than the village of Wraxall. The outlook of many properties in the Elms is to the countryside, rather than an urban environment, and in that respect is similar to that in Failand. Hence, I consider the case for a stronger link to Nailsea on character of housing to be tenuous at best. Residents enjoy using the many footpaths in Wraxall to the north and east of the estate and value the agriculture and biodiversity, particularly the work on the Belmont Estate rewilding grassland, creating wetlands, restoring peatland, and regenerating woodland around Watercress Farm.

I believe that the Commission’s proposal to include the Elms estate in a Nailsea Ward would significantly impair good local government. The Golden Valley Ward member for Nailsea would be expected to attend both Wraxall & Failand Parish Council meetings as well as Nailsea Town Council meetings in order to understand and represent the views and needs of their constituents, which may be conflicting as they would need to represent opposing views at the same time. This would be in additional to the Long Ashton Ward members who would continue to attend Wraxall & Failand Parish Council meetings. This appears to be overly bureaucratic and can hardly be considered to a good example of local democracy.

Mindful of the submissions made by Wraxall & Failand Parish Council and my comments above, I request that the Commission reconsiders the draft recommendations and retains the current arrangement for the Elms estate to remain in the Long Ashton ward and continue to be represented Long Ashton Ward Councillors.

Attached Documents:

None attached