Wraxall & Failand Parish Council

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Objection to Proposed Ward Boundary Changes

We are writing to strongly object to the proposed changes to the ward boundaries in Wraxall and Failand. Specifically moving the Elms from the Long Ashton / Wraxall ward to Nailsea.

The Local Government Boundary Commission's New Electoral arrangements for North Somerset Councils "Draft Recommendations" report dated April 2026 ("the Draft Report") states that "when carrying out an electoral review the Commission has three main considerations:

1. "Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.

2. Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identify.

3. Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government"

It is the opinion of Wraxall and Failand Parish Council that the Commission has not arrived at the best balance that reflects the interest and identity for the local community and in providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government. It is the intention that this document will clearly demonstrate the imbalance created by the proposal put forward by the Commission.

While we understand the importance of achieving electoral equality, we do not believe the current proposal adequately takes into account the identity and community ties of the people who live in this area. In particular, the proposal appears to divide an established community that shares longstanding social, cultural, practical and local government connections.

The Draft Report Section 51 page 12 states " *relatively few of the points put forward (by Wraxall and Failand Parish Council) related specifically to the Elms itself, beyond references to the management of the local playground and the outcomes of the CGR and Neighbourhood Plan consultations* ".

Having made reference to the engagement by the people of the Elms with the Neighbourhood Plan, which was one of the largest Neighbourhood Plan community engagements ever recorded and the overwhelming response to the CGR, the largest by far that North Somerset Council had ever seen, clearly demonstrates the identity and interests of the people of the Elms and their connection to the rural parish of Wraxall and Failand and the Long Ashton ward; to dismiss this is incomprehensible and incompatible with the remit. In our view the Commission is neglecting to place sufficient weight on the evidence from community engagement in assessing a statutory criteria.

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ("the 2009 Act") states: {**highlighted for effect only**}

“(3) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), in making the recommendations the Local Government Boundary Commission for England **must have regard to**

(a) the need to secure that the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of members of the county council to be elected is, as nearly as possible, the same in every electoral area of the council,

(b) **the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities** and in particular—

(i) **the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable**, and

(ii) the desirability of **not breaking local ties** when fixing boundaries,

(c) **the need to secure effective and convenient local government**, and

(d) the boundaries of the electoral areas of any district council whose area is within the area of the county council.”

We strongly believe the Commission has not fully taken into consideration the sections highlighted above and therefore based on the evidence detailed herein we request the Commission seriously reconsider its proposal and take into account information contained in this response that may not have been available to the Commission at the time of finalising the Draft Report.

Since the last review in 2014 there has been no significant change in the immediate area and based on North Somerset Councils site allocation for future development there is no significant change envisaged. Therefore, we strongly believe there is no basis for amending the ward boundary, simply to appease Nailsea.

The Boundary Commission's statutory criteria include but are not limited to; ***reflecting the identities and interests of local communities***. It is our opinion the proposed arrangements fail to do so for the following reasons:

• Residents in the Elms identify strongly with Wraxall and the Long Ashton ward and not with Nailsea into which they are proposed to be moved.

• The proposed boundary separates a community that shares common local facilities, schools, public footpath links, places of worship, and community organisations including the Wraxall and Failand Parish Council (3 of our councillors live in the Elms).

• There are clear historical and social ties within the existing ward arrangement that have developed over many years and which should not be disregarded.

• The proposed boundaries rely on arbitrary or artificial divisions that do not reflect how residents themselves understand their local area.

• The residents of the Elms, identify strongly with the rural feel and connection of Wraxall and the Long Ashton ward as a rural community and do not identify with Nailsea, which is an urban environment.

• Most recently, the residents of the Elms voted strongly with their voices to a proposal put forward by Cllr Mike Bird of Nailsea Town Council that the Elms as well as a parcel of agricultural land to the North of Nailsea should be a part of Nailsea. Citing reasons which were unfounded and at best ambiguous. North Somerset Council recorded the volume of concerns raised by the residents of the Elms as "unprecedented" and by far the largest number of responses to any previous Governance Review ever carried out.

Local identity is not simply a matter of geography. Communities are formed through shared institutions, daily interaction, common concerns, and a sense of belonging. The current proposals risk weakening effective local representation by combining areas with different interests and identities while splitting cohesive neighbourhoods apart.

The Elms, whilst on the edge of Nailsea, is clearly separated from Nailsea by Lodge lane. It's part of a rural community and sees itself as looking out to the rural and agricultural setting of Wraxall and beyond and not inward to the Town of Nailsea, the centre of which is around 1 mile from the edge of the Elms. The people of the Elms interact with the local farmers on footpaths and sites of significant historical interest as well Arboricultural organisations studying the protection of trees and bat habitats / migrations, wildlife in the Land Yeo river and the restoration of wetlands on the Belmont estate.

There is no evidence of local demand for this proposed change. On the contrary, local opinion is overwhelmingly opposed. During recent canvassing for the Wraxall and Failand Parish Council elections in 2023 and NSC Governance Review 2025 we encountered widespread opposition to any proposal to suggest the residents of the Elms identified with Nailsea.

Residents consistently expressed pride in living in and being a part of Wraxall and the Long Ashton ward.

In strengthening this argument, it is our understanding that the following electoral arrangements for county councils and mandatory considerations as detailed in Schedule 2 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 are used for assessing any potential change to a ward boundary:

Schedule 2, section 2 (sub-section 3b) states amongst other things: " *in making the recommendations the Local Government Boundary Commission for England must have regard to— {***highlighted for effect only***}*

(b) the need to ***reflect the identities and interests of local communities*** *and in particular—*

> *(i) the desirability of* ***fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable****, and*
>
> *(ii) the desirability of* ***fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties****,*

(c) the need to secure ***effective and convenient local government****,"*

1. Electoral Arrangements

a. "The Commission must ensure recommendations…… must align with district and parish ward boundaries, preventing them from being split"

The Draft Report's proposal for Wraxall and Failand clearly splits the parish of Wraxall and Failand into two, by subdividing Wraxall into the Long Ashton ward and Nailsea Golden Valley ward. Separating 3 Wraxall and Failand Parish councillors and creating a position where **Wraxall and Failand will now have 3 district councillors** (2 in Long Ashton ward and 1 in Golden Valley ward).

The people of the Elms will need to engage with a Nailsea ward Councillor for some matters and Wraxall and Failand Parish Councillors for others. It is highly unlikely a Nailsea ward councillor will attend Wraxall and Failand Council meetings as well as Nailsea Town Council meetings. Therefore, this proposal fails to provide effective and convenient local government for the people and will quickly become unsustainable and confusing at best for everyone.

2. Mandatory Considerations

a. "Electoral Equality: ensuring the ratio of voters to councillors is as close to identical as possible in every electoral area".

Nothing in the immediate area has changed since the last review in 2014 and there is nothing planned as part of NSC site allocation for development.

b. "Local Community Interests: The need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities, focusing on fixing easily identifiable boundaries and not breaking local ties".

As clearly stated above.

It is therefore clear that the Draft Report put forward by the Commission **does not**:

a. reflect the identity and interests of the people of the Elms

b. retain well established local ties

c. secure the parish and ward boundary

d. have community support and if implemented would generate significant opposition

e. provide arrangements that support effective and convenient local government for the people.

We would therefore ask the Commission to reconsider its Draft Report and the proposed change to the ward boundaries and instead adopt arrangements that better reflect established community identity and local ties, even if this requires some flexibility in electoral variance. As an alternative, we propose leaving the Elms in the Long Ashton / Wraxall and Failand ward and focus any changes on the existing and potential new wards to the West of Nailsea where there is new housing growth and more forecast.

We also encourage the Commission to give significant weight to the views expressed by residents, local organisations, and community groups who have first-hand experience and knowledge of the area, its identity and what it sees best suits their community cohesion within Wraxall and the Long Ashton ward.

Thank you for considering this submission.

North Somerset

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Comment text:

Related subject: Nailsea

Please find attached Wraxall and Failand Parish Council's response to the draft recommendations proposed by the Commission for Nailsea, The Elms and Long Ashton Ward.

Attached Documents:

- wf-pc-response---lgbce-ward-boundary-draft-recommendations.pdf