

Sandwell

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Comment text:

Related subject: Rowley Regis

Please see attached document.

Attached Documents:

- draft-plan-halesowen-conservative-association-response-2025.docx

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing on behalf of Halesowen Conservative Association to support the draft proposals for the Rowley Regis area of Sandwell Council.

We thank the Commission for taking our suggestion of a Blackheath & Old Hill and Cradley Heath ward pattern. We feel that these boundaries better reflect local ties, ensuring that all these towns are fully contained within a ward of their own, as opposed to the current situation where both Cradley Heath and Old Hill are split across three wards.

To reiterate our previous position, we feel that the boundary along Claremont Street, Laurence Lane and Beechcroft Road is the most sensible dividing line between the towns of Cradley Heath and Old Hill. Beechcroft Road does not have any properties on either side of the road to divide between wards.

We continue to suggest that, if any issues do arise with the potential boundary in this location, then the commission may be able to run the boundary along the rear of properties on the northern side of these roads, allowing both sides of the road to be in the Cradley Heath ward, whilst all properties north of these would then fall into the Blackheath & Old Hill ward. This would be an acceptable way to ensure neighbours are not split, whilst still respecting the different communities and enabling both towns to be wholly contained within their respective wards rather than being split.

It is to the north of this boundary that local amenities begin to reflect that the area is indeed Old Hill as a town distinct in of itself, such as Old Hill Masjid and Holy Trinity Church Old Hill.

The arbitrary boundary between the existing Cradley Heath & Old Hill and Rowley wards which separate the area around Cox's Lane and Best Street from the rest of Old Hill is resolved, and Old Hill is fully united in one ward. This is a positive outcome for that local community and will ensure better representation with elected representatives able to represent one coherent community.

We also welcome the Commission's proposal for the new boundary between Blackheath and Rowley wards. Blackheath itself has a porous boundary with the remaining parts of Rowley Regis and has historically been poorly defined. However, it is clear that the vast majority of Blackheath amenities are located within a short distance from Blackheath Town Centre, with roads in the estates further away from the town sharing less of a connection.

We note that your draft proposals keep amenities like Blackheath Primary School and Blackheath Central Methodist Church within the Blackheath ward accurately reflecting the area that surrounds the town itself, whilst not compromising any residential addresses that fall within the Blackheath town catchment area. The boundary along Mincing Lane is sensible as a heavily used thorough through in the area, and where the extremities of Blackheath Town Centre begin to become residential estates with no town centre connection, much like the remaining parts of the new Rowley ward.

We also note that the draft proposals resolve a peculiar three-way split of Newbury Lane as is currently the case in the existing ward pattern, where adjacent neighbours are inexplicably split between Rowley, Tividale and Langley wards. Your new boundary along this main road would make for much more sensible and understandable local government for residents. The housing estates north of Newbury Lane and around Portway Leisure Centre have no physical connection to the vast majority of Tividale ward, being separated physically by Bury Hill Park. Therefore, a ward where they are united with neighbouring housing estates in Rowley is much more sensible, whilst still

maintaining the very distinctive Lion Farm area on the southern side of Newbury Lane in its entirety in Langley ward.

We reiterate that the area that forms the Brickhouse Estate is a very distinctive and proud community. Whilst it is far too small to form a ward by itself, it should remain united and form part of a wider ward which reflects its local ties. The Brickhoue Estate's proximity to both Old Hil and Blackheath makes the decision to pair this area with those an easy one, in our opinion, and welcome the draft proposals that adopt this ward pattern.

We would like to thank the Commission for its work on these proposals and urge you to implement the draft ward pattern in full, with only minor alterations as set out above should the commission sees fit.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Dobb

Chair, Halesowen & Rowley Regis Conservative Association.