

Sandwell

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Comment text:

I welcome the draft proposals for the Rowley Regis area, which will result in wards that respect local community ties far better than the existing boundaries.

Rowley Regis can be a confusing area to understand. That is because it is not itself a town, instead it is a collection of towns that form the wider area that has become known as Rowley Regis over a long period of time. There is no 'Rowley Regis Town Centre', therefore, I applaud the boundary commission for instead focussing on the actual towns that make up this area to ensure they are all coherently represented in the new boundaries.

As it stands, the towns of both Cradley Heath and Old Hill are split between three wards. Parts of Cradley Heath can be found in the existing ward that bears its name, Blackheath and Rowley wards. Old Hill is split between the ward carrying its name and Rowley ward too.

This is confusing for residents and makes it more difficult for councillors to truly represent the best interests of all the area they serve, especially when they might represent a small portion of another town compared to a much larger, more coherent township in the rest of their ward.

A clear example of this would be in the existing Blackheath ward. There are significant portions of Blackheath ward that are considered locally to be part of the larger Cradley Heath township, especially the areas around Waterfall Lane and the eastern portion of Station Road. You can see on a map that roads such as Sherbourne Road have been artificially included in Blackheath ward despite clearly having greater connections with the Haden Cross area of Cradley Heath.

Additionally, it is notable that the area around Waterfall Lane and Higgs Field Crescent all have Cradley Heath in their address. It is positive in your draft proposals that these areas are included within a new ward representing the whole town, ending the confusing situation where people living in Cradley Heath addresses are actually electing Blackheath Councillors.

This is also the case for Old Hill, as now all of this town will be in a ward that carries the town's name. Previously, the boundary meant that the

Cox's Lane area, that clearly has nothing in common with areas like Rowley Hall, were separated from the town centre that its residents could walk less than three minutes to reach.

Your draft proposals will be a far better situation because the elected members for each of these towns are able to fully represent everyone that lives within them, rather than the current, confusing myriad of exclaves across the Rowley Regis area.

The proposed Rowley ward is also a sensible proposal, especially given many of the housing estates that make up this area do not belong to a specific local town itself. They all form part of the wider Rowley Regis area, but since this is not one town but a collection of areas with no individual town centre, it is always the case that some of these areas will have a non-town specific ward. The makeup of estates that form the new Rowley ward, all orbiting around the local landmark that is Rowley Hills.

Moving the Brickhouse Estate, which is very close in proximity to both Old Hill and Blackheath, into its new ward would place residents living in that area in a ward with which they feel some local affinity.

Finally, I welcome the new boundary in the Newbury Lane area. Previously, a confusing three-way boundary split neighbouring residents between Tividale, Langley and Rowley wards. This was unnecessary and placed several roads that are physically disconnected with Tividale in that ward, at the expense of actually having all of Tividale in one, coherent ward. Placing the Portway area in full in Rowley, and keeping Lion Farm together in Langley, is a much more sensible option that I am sure would be welcomed by residents and Councillors alike.

This a joint statement with the Rowley Conservatives.

Attached Documents:

None attached