

Sandwell

Personal Details:

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Organisation Name: (Member of the public)

Comment text:

Related subject: Rowley Regis - Blackheath

Please see attached a proposed alternative of the draft proposal for Blackheath Ward.

Attached Documents:

- blackheath-boundary_.docx

Firstly, I understand the reason for a Local Government boundary review, and it's aim that a councillor will approximately represent the same number of people in each ward for fair representation. However, I do not understand why the published review is based upon a group who do not work or live in Rowley Regis, or any wider part of Sandwell. A cross-party submission was originally made by Sandwell Council based on the knowledge of communities.

Secondly, the town of Rowley Regis is made up of four wards; Rowley, Blackheath, Tividale and Cradley Heath & Oldhill. I wish to propose an alternative to Blackheath as both a resident and as Councillor of Blackheath ward.

The proposal from the Commission does take into consideration fair representation for the percentage of the population per Councillor, but has not given fair consideration to the Parliamentary Review that has recently taken place. The Parliamentary Review moved Blackheath into two constituencies and residents have recently been notified of their new boundaries. The Commission's proposal for Blackheath will move my ward into three constituencies and will also have a new town added. It is proposed to become Blackheath & Oldhill and form part of Halesowen, West Bromwich and Smethwick.

I understand that the Commission has limited flexibility, but I believe that geographical logic and local knowledge could have been used better – in my proposal I am asking the commission to keep Blackheath, as Blackheath and I also ask that the limit of the constituencies remain as two.

Having lived in Sandwell for more years than it's formation and in the Blackheath area for more than 40 years, a Councillor in Blackheath for more than 10 years and the current leader of Sandwell Council – I live and understand the real-life geography, for example which roads are used daily, what natural walkways and natural barriers exist and how people actually move around the ward.

A natural line was submitted to the Boundary Commission originally before the published proposal, but I do understand the need for fair representation and that the Commission is legally required to review boundaries even if nothing feels broken in the first place.

I hope that Sandwell local knowledge can be taken into consideration for the continuation of strong social bonds, sense of belonging and cohesive communities and that is why I am proposing an alternative view and suggestion:

- The line through Rowley Hills is not natural and takes approximately 70% of a proud community from an established estate from Rowley and moves it into Blackheath. Primary Schools in the area are Brickhouse and Springfield where

most children attend school – Blackheath Primary is a bus ride away. Rowley food bank is also located on this estate. I propose that the main road – Highgate Street from the Island incorporating Garrats Lane keeping Moor Lane is a natural boundary line and keeps Rowley Hills and the established area and community intact.

- Besides the commission proposing on moving my own address in Goths Close out of Blackheath it is also proposing that part of the established community where I live is also moved by dividing established communities and cutting in half the Oldbury Road and using non-main routes as boundary lines. I believe that the natural boundary for Blackheath are the main roads and current bus routes – Throne Road and the Oldbury Road. Locally the Oldbury Road is well known for traffic jams into Blackheath Town Centre. This part of Blackheath is also connected through a series of alleyways and shortcuts to Blackheath train station and the town centre. A good example is where I live and the fact that I can walk or cycle to Blackheath as the crow flies within minutes (directly) – this all ties in with my beliefs that I (my address) belongs in Blackheath.
- Oldhill is socially, economically and culturally connected to Cradley Heath being next to one another – they are connected with communities and faith groups.

In summary my proposal takes into consideration the realignment of Blackheath's local features and group communities to schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods including local shops, public transport – I have included my proposal in map form below and in written roads as follows:

Highgate Street from the traffic island, Garrats lane, Moor Lane, Church Road, Rowley Hall Estate, Throne Road, Oldbury Road, Regis Heath Estate, Blackheath Station, Avenue Road, Horner Way, Halesowen Road, Station Road, Heathfield Way

