

Local Government Boundary Commission
Windsor House
First Floor
50 Victoria Street
SW1H 0TL

15th August 2022

Dear Sir,

Second Consultation on Draft Proposals for Brighton and Hove

I write further to my previous consultation response on the 10th April 2022 and I continue to restrict my comments to the proposals as they pertain to the former Withdean ward. To remind the Commission, I served as an elected Councillor for Withdean from 2015 - following a two-year candidacy - until the elections in 2019.

Having studied the Commission's proposals, I find myself in sharp disagreement with the revised boundaries for Westdene and Patcham. The case for such a ward is extremely weak and should be disregarded for the following reasons:

- **Community connections are weak** – the railway line forms an effective boundary and has encouraged distinct community of interests in this part of Brighton. To take one example the Brangwyn estate (separated from the rest of Westdene by the rail line) was part of the old Westdene ward but was removed to Patcham in 2003. This better fit the community; and in my experience I cannot recall receiving much correspondence from Brangwyn residents believing them to be a part of the Withdean ward. Evidently then, they associate themselves much more with the Patcham ward. Moreover, and on this very point, Zoopla also lists the Brangwyn estate as Patcham given its proximity to Patcham Manor and the old village. They also share joint bus networks which also maintain cohesion.
- **The Local Action Teams (LATs) retain distinct identities:** In the submission by Mr Lovell on behalf of the Withdean Labour Branch he cites the joint working between Patcham and Withdean LATs as evidence for community cohesion. The Withdean and Patcham Network was a one-off trial when additional funding came about and was the brainchild of a Conservative Councillor who included his colleagues in the neighbouring ward – me being one of them. In my recollection there was one meeting at All Saints Church in Patcham and no further leaflet has taken place in the last five years which I believe has been corroborated by the Patcham LAT chair. In fact, the website itself says further meetings are suspended – from 2019!

- **There is a lack of community support** – splitting the established community of Patcham and Hollingbury in order to foist together Patcham and Westdene is eccentric and is not supported by local groups, not least in Patcham.
- **Transport links are weak** – Links to Patcham from Westdene are poor for those without car transportation with no bus routes there. For the first two years of my term, I relied heavily on bus transport as I could not drive. In my view the public transport links between Patcham and Westdene are so weak that I would not have effectively managed to represent such a ward without car transport which surely undermines the sustainable goals we all agree with. This has been a repeated concern when school boundaries have changed. This is in contrast to the proposed Hove Park and Westdene ward where public transport links are established.
- **School catchments are volatile** – during the last school catchment changes that Westdene and Brangwyn was moved into the Patcham High School catchment to bolster the financial viability of that school rather than a shared commonality of interest; this reason was decreed by the Schools Adjudicator in 2008.¹

Westdene itself is not in the Dorothy Stringer and Varndean joint catchment and given the oversubscription within this catchment – in fact it must be pointed out that several children within the catchment were displaced when the catchment had too many children for the combined Pupil Admission Number and I campaigned for bulge classes at Varndean to take these additional pupils in 2017 - so Westdene parents are not able to routinely send their children to these schools despite the assertions made by Withdean Labour Branch in their submission. This evidence is faulty and therefore ought to be struck out.

A reason that parents may wish their children to attend Dorothy Stringer or Varndean is better explained that these are considered the best schools in the city rather than their Brighton location per se. Parents are far more willing for their children to travel when the school is regarded as exceptional – Cardinal Newman and the King’s School have children travelling from end to the end in the city. Of course, they do so through the bus routes they lay on.

Furthermore, and by contrast Dorothy Stringer and Varndean have never to my recollection been proposed seriously as part of a Westdene catchment due in part to the reliance on car travel - walking distances are too long over the railway line and then A23 forced by the paucity of public transport connections. This does not tally with council policy for school transport.

It should be noted that a new school is being planned at Toads Hole Valley which will further reorientate catchments to this part of the city in the Hove Park and Westdene area.

I am very grateful for the time taken to read this submission and I very much hope the Commission revises its proposals in light of the above and other like submissions received from the local community.

¹ [Microsoft Word - Item71aAppdx1CMMAdjudicatorConsultationFinal0.doc \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](#) 2008 retrieved 15th August 2022

I look forward to reading your final proposals in due course.

With faithful regards,

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