

Sunderland

Personal Details:

Name: Dr Antony Mullen

Email: [REDACTED]

Postcode: [REDACTED]

Organisation Name: Conservative Party (District or county councillor)

Comment text:

Please see attached the Conservative Party's collective response to the LGBCE proposals for Sunderland.

Attached Documents:

- Conservative Party Responses to the LGBCE Proposals for Sunderland.pdf

Conservative Party Responses to the Sunderland Local Government Boundary Proposals

Overview

Overall, the Conservative Party in Sunderland is supportive of these proposals. We feel the Local Government Boundary Commission has produced a set of warding arrangements that reflect natural communities; which use place names rather than other indicators, in most cases; and which lend themselves to good local governance.

There are, however, genuine issues with some of the warding arrangements that we have highlighted in this document. These are minor changes which have very little or no impact upon elector numbers, but which make a major difference in terms of community cohesion, local governance, and making boundaries clearer and more easily identifiable.

We also wish to highlight our concerns about the Labour Party's attempts to politicise this process. The Labour Group on the Council has made explicit its attempts to use this part of the process to massively change warding patterns to make key wards stronger for Labour.

Given Labour submitted such an explicitly unacceptable set of proposals at the first stage, we believe that anything Labour submits now should be seen as a last-minute attempt to rectify their earlier mistakes and to achieve political gain.

Please note that this document is accompanied by an online petition, signed by local people. The petition a) endorses our proposals, as set out below, on the whole but b) also specifically calls for the Boundary Commission to adopt our proposals in respect of Barnes Park (set out below). This petition can be accessed [via this link](#).

Finally, Sunderland Council has established a cross-party working group to respond to the Commission's proposals. In this document, we refer to some comments made by other parties in this working group.

Boundary Issues

We have made several suggestions to improve the proposed warding arrangements. These tend to relate to issues of **good local governance** and **community identity**. In some cases, we think the Commission is proposing wards that do not reflect genuine communities and which we believe would have governance challenges. Some of these are **significant but meaningful proposals**, but some are suggestions to **tidy up boundaries** in ways that have little to no impact upon elector numbers.

- The division of **Barnes Park** between two wards is illogical and undermines community cohesion. This is a major local landmark and it requires a coherent approach to investment and maintenance. It is totally against the principle of good governance to split it between two wards, because the park will then have to compete for two different localised sets of funding. Sunderland Council operates an 'Area Committee' structure and ward-based funding streams: if the park is split between wards and, potentially between Area Committees, it would lead to two sets of councillors with potentially competing visions/priorities for the park and two sets of Council officers responsible for maintenance (as Environment Services Officers are allocated by Area too).
 - Furthermore, one of the two wards in which it is proposed part of Barnes Park be located also includes Backhouse Park, so the localised ward budget for the **Tunstall and Humbledon** councillors would be squeezed by the need to deliver projects in two parks. This is further evidence that this is not conducive to good local government.
 - There is consensus among all parties on the Council that the above is the case, but there is a disagreement about how to rectify this.
 - We propose that the **Barnes and Thornhill** boundary should run the length of Ettrick Grove to Durham Road, and then eastwards on Durham Road to Dunelm/Barnes Park Road to meet the proposed boundary. This is a modest change that would have only the most minor impact upon the elector numbers in either ward, but it would resolve what is presently a major and unworkable

governance issue surrounding the park, whilst also just representing an overall tidier boundary.

- The Lib Dem group will propose putting the boundary behind the houses, but this a) does not use natural boundaries and b) will be very hard to describe to a member of the public. Their argument is that some houses on Ettrick Grove would not be in Humbledon if our proposal is adopted, but our proposal means all residents of Ettrick Grove are in the same ward. Their proposal would split Ettrick Grove between two wards.

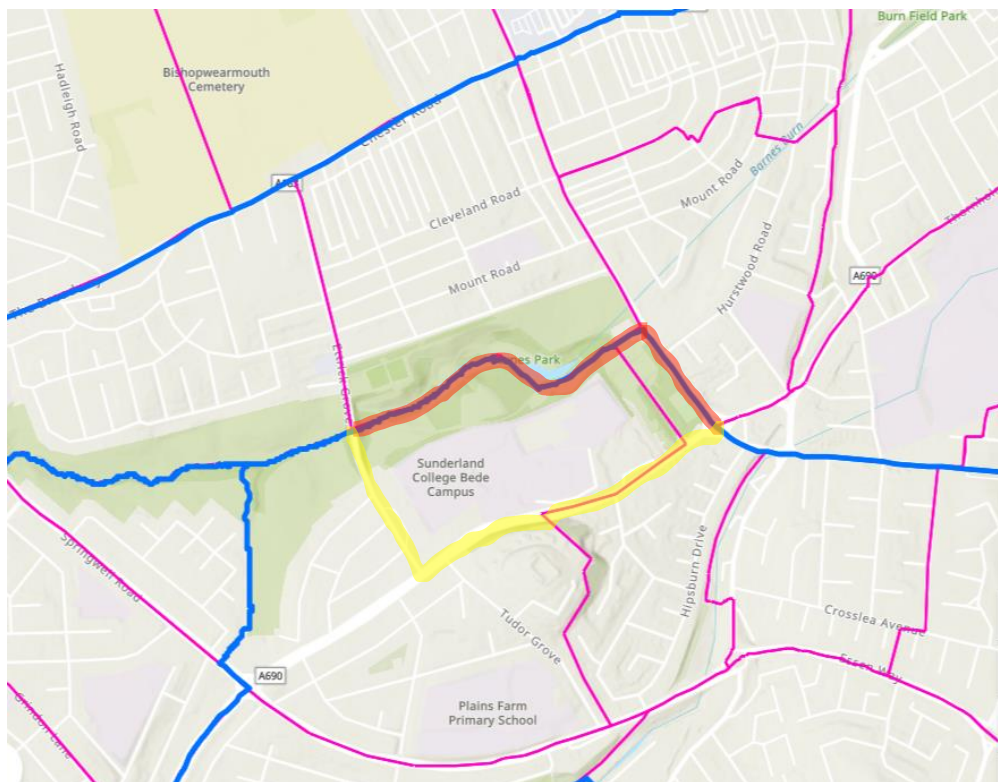


Image 1: We propose including Barnes Park in its entirety in the Barnes and Thornhill Ward, by using Ettrick Grove and Durham Road as the new boundary. The yellow line shows the proposed new boundary and the red highlight indicated the boundary we recommend deleting.

- The proposed **Farringdon and Silksworth Ward** boundary with **Tunstall and Humbledon Ward** cuts the Sainsbury's site in half – namely, it places the Sainsbury's store in a different ward to the Sainsbury's petrol garage – but for

what reason? It also draws a totally indistinguishable line across green space which would be hard to describe to a member of the public or determine without some kind of physical indicator.

- It is possible to include all of Sainsbury's in **Tunstall and Humbledon** by running the ward boundary up the back of the site, using the road that leads into the Everyone Active gym car park, leading onto a footpath and then down to meet the boundary, as proposed. This would be easier to describe, to distinguish in person and resolves the issue of having divided the Sainsbury's estate – which we include, in full, in **Tunstall and Humbledon**. We believe that there is consensus among all parties on the Council surrounding this proposal.

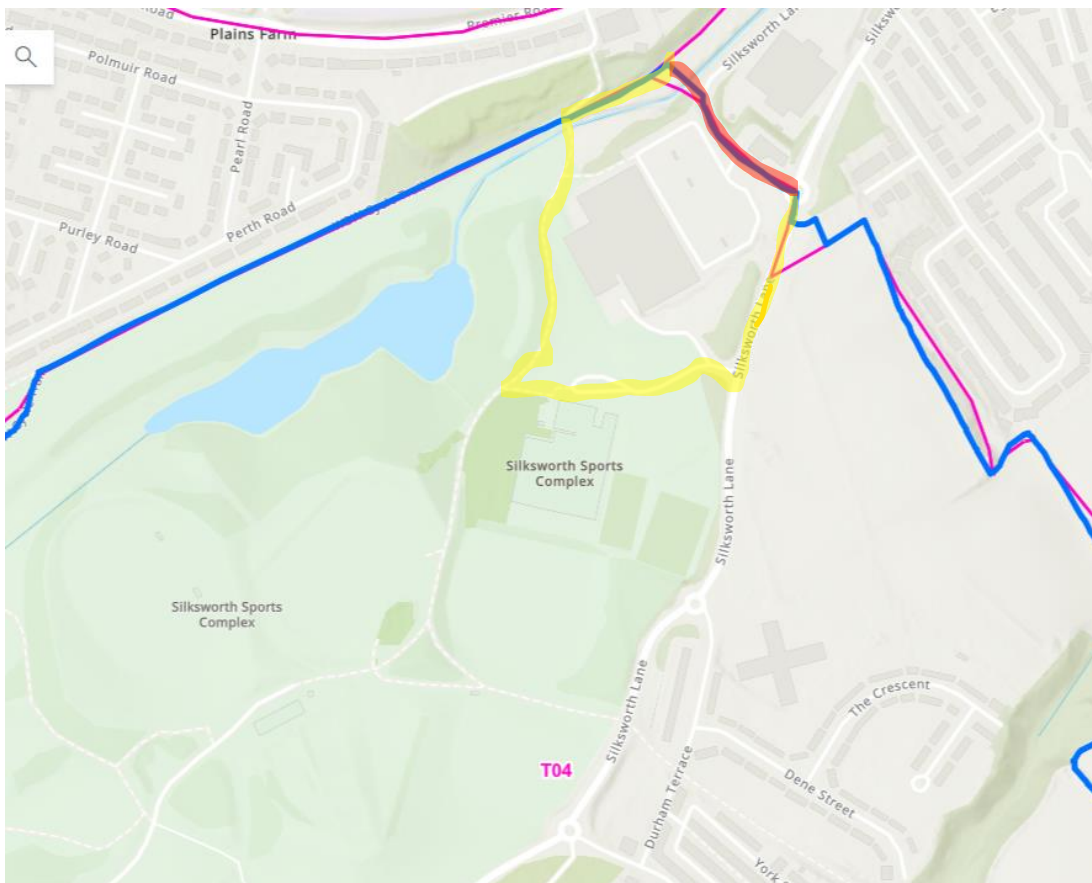


Image 2: The Sainsbury's site is currently divided between two wards – and, to achieve this, the Commission proposes an invisible boundary over a patch of grass and small stream that will be hard to pinpoint. We propose using an existing footpath leading to the Everyone Active car park, then the outer boundary of the car park, which then joins Silksworth Lane, as the boundary. This is shown in

yellow and the boundary highlighted in red shows that which we recommend removing. It has no impact upon elector numbers, but it keeps one set of councillors for the supermarket site.

- The decision to include some streets in Hollycarrside (e.g. Trevarren Drive, Ocean View, Leechmere Way and neighbouring cul-de-sacs) in the **Ryhope Ward** whilst the majority of Hollycarrside is in the **Grangetown Ward** is an illogical and artificial split of a very small community. It is a consensus view of all parties on the Council that Hollycarrside should be in a single ward, but we disagree over which.
 - We recommend the inclusion of the entire M02 polling district in the **Grangetown Ward** to keep Hollycarrside unified, with the new ward boundary running along the current M02 polling district boundary. This has the advantage of using an existing footpath as a distinctive boundary. Both wards would be within 10% of the acceptable number of electors. This has the advantage of keeping Hollycarrside within a single ward and believe **Grangetown** to be the better option, as a large green space (highlighted in blue) cuts this area off from the rest of Ryhope.



Image 3: We oppose the unjustified and illogical split of Hollycarrside and propose its inclusion in the Grangetown Ward, in full. The yellow line denotes the proposed new boundary and the red highlight indicated what we propose deleting.

- Following on directly from the above point about **Grangetown** and the splitting of Hollycarrside, we are aware that the Labour Group on the Council intends to propose that all of Hollycarrside should be within the **Ryhope Ward** and that, to compensate for the impact on electoral numbers, some of the proposal **Central Ward** should be moved into **Grangetown Ward**.
 - Our view is that Labour is trying to gerrymander the boundaries for political reasons. The consequence of this though is that ‘Back on the Map’ – the de facto Hendon community hub – would end up in a heavily revised **Grangetown Ward** whilst most of Hendon would be in the proposed **Central Ward**. This has been discussed in the context of the Council’s working group on the boundary proposals, but at no point has Labour been able to produce numbers that work in respect of this proposal.
 - We consider a small extension to the southern boundary of the proposed **Grangetown Ward**, and renaming it **Grangetown and Hollycarrside**, would create a neat, sensible ward out of two major local communities. Labour’s proposed revisions – which are done for the purpose of political gerrymandering – would create a ward out of fragments of several communities.

Naming Issues

We believe that several proposed wards have names which **do not reflect the communities within them**, either at all or partially. It is also our view that the Commission has been **inconsistent in naming wards**, in that some contain **multiple words to reflect several communities** and others are **single-word names that miss out substantial communities** that could, and should, be named.

- The **Central Ward** is too generically named and, locally, ‘Central Ward’ is currently used (e.g. in the Council chamber during debate) as shorthand to refer to **Washington Central Ward**. It is our strong suggestion that **City Centre Ward** would be a much more geographically and culturally appropriate name and that it better supports the identity of the city centre. This is appropriate because the ward more or less captures the official boundary of the city centre as understood by the Council. We disagree with the convoluted name which will be proposed by the Liberal Democrats and believe that **City Centre** is both a) more accurate and b) more recognisable to local people. The formal boundary of Deptford, which they propose as part of the place name, is [shown here](#). As you will see, this is a small area which is largely industrial and not residential.
- The proposed **Pennywell Ward** should be renamed **Pennywell and South Hylton** because the latter community is large and distinct, but it is in no way captured by the proposed name. All three political parties agree with this.
- We disagree with the Labour Party proposals to retain **Castle** and **Redhill** as ward names as these are vague and artificial – neither is a proper place name.
- The **Fulwell** community is now even more fractured than under the previous warding arrangements. It is contained within the proposed Roker, Southwick and Fulwell Wards. It would be much more appropriate to name the proposed **Fulwell Ward** the **Seaburn Ward**, and rename **Southwick Ward** the **Southwick and Fulwell Mill Ward**, as the full Fulwell Mill community is now contained

within the proposed **Southwick Ward**. Moreover, **Seaburn** is the largest community within the proposed **Fulwell Ward**.

- In our view, there are too many people who live in Fulwell whose residence, under these arrangements, are not within the **Fulwell Ward** for this to be an appropriate name. There are no other examples of where a community is divided between three wards, with one of those wards assuming the name of that community.
- We do not think that **Houghton South and Hetton Downs Ward** is an appropriate name for a ward, as Houghton South could refer to the entire south of Houghton. We therefore propose that this ward should be called **East Rainton and Hetton Downs Ward**.
- We suggest that **Houghton North** (for the same reasons as above) should be renamed **Burnside and Fencehouses Ward** because this a) reflects community place names and b) avoids conflating the ward name with the constituency name (Houghton South).
- We propose that the **Shiney Row Ward** should be renamed **Penshaw and Shiney Row** as this would be in keeping with city-wide approach to wards having more than one community within the ward title and adequately reflect the distinct Penshaw community within this ward.
- We believe that the **Washington Wards** should be named after villages or defining features, rather than compass points. The Liberal Democrats support this, but have differing name proposals. We propose the following names:
 - **Washington Central** becomes **Washington Town Centre Ward**
 - **Washington East** becomes **Barmston and Sulgrave Ward**
 - **Washington North** becomes **Albany and Usworth Ward**
 - **Washington South** becomes **Riverside Ward** to reflect the fact that part of this ward is not in Washington at all and is, in fact, in Houghton le Spring.

- **Washington West** becomes **Ayton and Springwell Village Ward**
 - We consider moving away from the compass points to be necessary, given that the boundaries are changing quite substantially in all 5 wards. This could cause severe confusion among residents who do not recognise that the boundaries of their ward has changed, because the same names are used. For example, will a current resident of Washington East easily understand why they are, all of a sudden, named Washington South?