

Walsall

Personal Details:

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Organisation Name: (District or county councillor)

Comment text:

Related subject: Willenhall South Ward

Please see attached document for the submission made by myself as a ward Councillor for the Willenhall South Ward.

Attached Documents:

- boundary-proposals.docx

Boundary Proposals – Cllr Simran Kaur Cheema

Willenhall is a historic market town with a strong heritage and deep-rooted history in the manufacture of locks and keys. Formerly served by the Willenhall Urban District Council before the amalgamation into Walsall, it is an area with a very distinct natural boundary. Its' demographic is mainly White British and Asian, with the majority minority group Indian. Upon reading into the proposals from the LGBCE, there are elements which are of concern, and I would urge the Boundary Commission to reconsider.

In an ideal world, I would keep my ward as it is. However, I recognise due to electoral variances this is not possible. Many residents of the Honeybourne estate and members of the congregation at the Gurdwara have expressed their concern at the proposal to include them in the Short Heath ward. Consequently, I have come up with the following proposals which would maintain the integrity of communities within the area and reduces the level of electoral variance.

The relocation of Thorne Road estate into the Short Heath ward would see an additional 997 electors in Short Heath, and the relocation of the Honeybourne estate into the Willenhall ward would see an addition of 518 electors. By my calculations, this would leave Willenhall with approximately 11450 electors (+2% variance) and Short Heath with 11,800 electors (+5% variance).

This is the most sensible proposal I would recommend maintaining the integrity of our communities and keep the level of electoral variance at suitable levels. Please see the below explanations as well as the appended maps for further information.

1. Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara Willenhall – 65 – 67 Walsall Road, Willenhall. WV13 2RD

Having spoken to members of the congregation in addition to the Gurdwara committee, they have informed me they are heavily against the proposals for the Gurdwara to be moved into the Short Heath ward. Most of the congregation that attends the Guru Nanak Gurdwara are from the current Willenhall South Ward. The Gurdwara is a distinct recognised place of worship in the Willenhall area from the 1960's. I, alongside the Gurdwara committee, would urge the Boundary commission to retain the Sikh temple in the Willenhall South Ward, as the rest of Walsall Road is to be kept in the Willenhall South and as the Gurdwara is also situated on Walsall Road, it would be better to keep Walsall Road as a whole in Willenhall South.

As a Councillor, I have also carried out monthly surgeries at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Willenhall, as most of the Sikh electorate I represent in Willenhall South attend Guru Nanak Gurdwara. I tend to pick up a lot of casework from the surgeries I do as it means I am accessible to the Willenhall Sikh community. If the Gurdwara is to be moved into the Short Heath ward, it would be difficult to carry out monthly surgeries somewhere which wouldn't fall into the ward I represent, despite most the Sikh electorate of the ward attending Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara Willenhall.

In addition, as a Willenhall South Councillor, I have been actively working with the Gurdwara and its committee, for example working on the Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan procession which takes place annually between Willenhall and Wednesfield. The Gurdwara approach me to prepare documents, procedures and assessments to be presented to the Safety Advisory Group at Walsall Council.

2. Honeybourne Estate

A large proportion of Honeybourne residents are from the Sikh faith background and frequent the temple. As the residents of this estate make use of community facilities and places of worship within the Willenhall ward, their community identity is very much with the heart of Willenhall. I don't believe that any resident from the Honeybourne estate would identify as living in Short Heath.

In addition, other estates in close proximity to the Sikh Gurdwara in Willenhall are populated with the Sikh community, therefore forming a community in its own right. I believe the arbitrary removal of the Honeybourne estate would split this community.

Children on this estate attend Willenhall schools – primary and secondary – notably St Giles Primary, Barcroft Primary and St Thomas More Catholic School. As a result of this, many residents feel a much greater association in Willenhall rather than Short Heath.

Please see appendix 1.2 below for further detail.

3. Thorne Road estate – alternative proposal

As you will note, Thorne Road backs onto Five Fields, which is in the Short Heath ward. Many residents of this estate may gravitate towards Short Heath, for recreation. Additionally, a number of school aged children attend secondary schools in the Short Heath ward, namely Willenhall E-Act Academy and Pool Hayes.

The alternative proposals as shown in appendix 1.1 highlights the addition of the estate, from the Monmer Lane bridge, incorporating Thorne Road, Webster Road and side streets and along the middle of Clothier Street.

4. Overdale Estate and Western Avenue estates

As stated previously, I would have preferred to keep the Willenhall South ward the way it is or amended the number of Councillors instead of altering natural boundaries. However, given the increase in housing and planned future developments in Willenhall, I understand this is not possible. I accept the proposal made by the Boundary Commission to place the Overdale and Western Avenue estates into the Short Heath ward as it is in close proximity to the Short Heath border and the estates do not have as much of an affinity to Willenhall that estates like the Honeybourne do.

Appendix 1.2

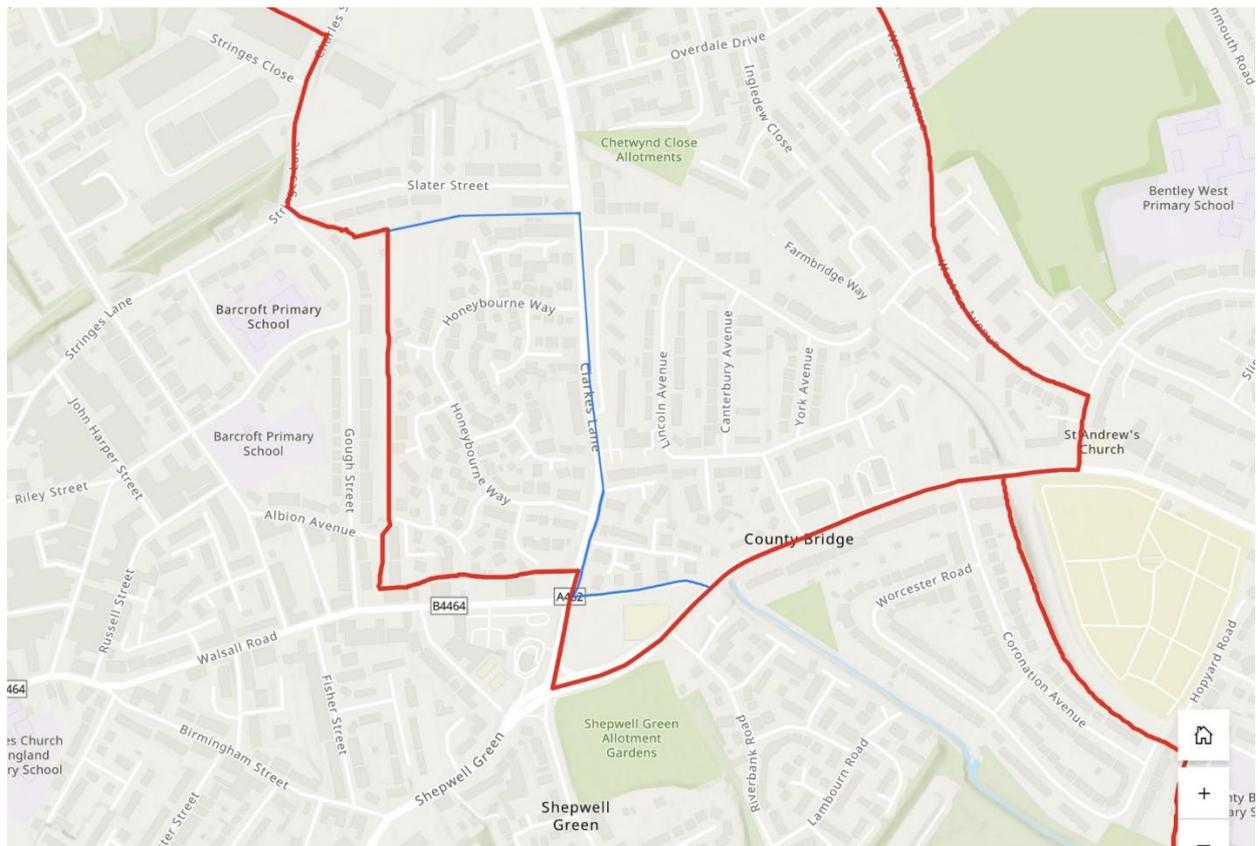


Image: The amendment made retaining Honeybourne Way estate and Guru Nanak Gurdwara Willenhall, with the border running down the middle of Clarks Lane. The proposed boundary line is in blue, against the boundary proposals in red.