

Walsall

Personal Details:

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Email: [REDACTED]
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Organisation Name: (District or county councillor)

Comment text:

Related subject: Short Heath

Local Government Boundary Review – Walsall MBC

Short Heath Ward Draft Proposal Response – Cllr Josh Whitehouse

1. I would like to thank the Commission for their draft proposals for the Short Heath Ward and for incorporating parts of our initial submission in relation to communities in Short Heath and recognising the strong community evidence and natural boundaries of the community that were provided. It is for these reasons that we wanted to maintain and protect the Short Heath identity.
2. However, I recognise that the current Short Heath ward is forecast to be overrepresented by 2029 and needs to expand.
3. It is noted that the Commission has adopted a suggestion made by a local resident to incorporate part of the current Willenhall South Ward, extending the Short Heath boundary southwards down Clarkes Lane, and incorporating the Honeybourne Way and Durham Avenue Estates, as well as Slater Street and other adjoining streets. The Commission believes that this reflects community identities, but you have welcomed further comments on this decision.
4. The proposed boundaries would severely damage the identity of the Short Heath community which is very distinct from the Willenhall Community. The areas that are proposed to be moved moved to Short Heath are areas that strongly identify as Willenhall and have a strong affinity to Willenhall. This means that both Willenhall and Short Heath residents will lose parts of their identity.
5. The residents in the areas that have been moved from Willenhall South do not consider themselves to be part of Short Heath and other parts of Short Heath would not consider them to be part of the same village area. The old railway line that runs between these two areas is a clear and

identifiable border between Willenhall and Short Heath and has been for centuries.

6. When speaking to residents about these proposed changes, they were quite surprised that these areas were to be added to Short Heath as “they were never part of the Short Heath Parish area and not part of the old Urban District.” Others have said “I would not class that as Short Heath at all.”

7. I would therefore suggest that the Short Heath Ward expand eastwards into Bentley (Bentley and Darlaston North Ward) as there are far greater connections and similarities between these areas and less physical barriers between the two.

8. I strongly support the recommendation to move Overdale Drive and surrounding streets into Short Heath, but I feel that the Commission could go further to expand the boundary up to Granbourne Road to include the houses in between. These areas all share a connection to Stroud Avenue and Short Heath.

9. The Stroud Avenue residential estate was built around the same time as the Poplar Avenue, Overdale Drive and Granbourne Road houses, as Short Heath expanded in the mid-20th Century. This can be seen in the architectural styles used.

10. Children from these areas attend Willenhall E-ACT Academy, Rosedale Infant School, Short Heath Junior School and Lodge Farm Primary School and many residents use the Stroud Avenue Shops and Lane Head (High Road shops) as their local centre.

11. The Stroud Medical Practice to the southern end of Western Avenue also shares an identity with Stroud Avenue, linking the areas together and demonstrating the community connections locally.

12. Granbourne Road is a clear and commonly used connection between the two areas and breaks the formal railway line for access.

13. Many residents from Overdale Drive, Granbourne Road and surrounding areas and Stroud Avenue use the railway line for walks and leisure amenities.

14. As a local Councillor, I am often contacted by residents in these areas who believe that I am their councillor and that they live in the Short Heath Ward. The move to put these streets into Short Heath would be a natural transition.

15. All these areas once made up one ward before Local Government reorganisation in the 1970s and these parts of modern-day Bentley were historically part of Short Heath. Further information can be seen here (<https://www.ukbmd.org.uk/reg/districts/walsall.html>) of changes between the parishes of Short Heath and Bentley which shows that these two areas have always been significantly tied.

16. It is also inappropriate for Willenhall Gurdwara on Walsall Road to be put into Short Heath. This is an important and central place for the Sikh Community in Willenhall to pray and worship and should remain in the Willenhall Ward.

17. Further to this, we strongly support the distinction that has been made on the southwestern boundary between Willenhall and Short Heath and the recognition that Five Fields acts as a strong natural boundary for both communities.

18. I strongly support the Commission’s proposals for the northern boundary between New Invention and Short Heath, and I am pleased that the Commission has chosen to maintain the current boundary between New Invention (formally Willenhall North) and Short Heath, along Coltham Road, Wood Lane and the Wyrley and Essington Canal. The New Invention and Short Heath Communities have separate identities and these roads and the canal act as a natural boundary between the two areas. I would like to reiterate the comments that I and Cllr Amandeep Garcha made in the previous round of consultation on this boundary, and I am pleased that the Commission have agreed with this.

Proposals for Boundary Line

19. Given the above information, I would argue that the new boundary for Short Heath should be as detailed below. I have included maps to show

how the new boundary should look and to demonstrate the alterations that I have made.

20. The current northern boundary between New Invention/Willenhall North and Short Heath should be maintained in its entirety, as the Boundary Commission have proposed.

21. The current southwestern boundary along Five Fields and the rear of properties on Fibbersley and Thorne Road etc should be maintained in its entirety, as the Boundary Commission have proposed.

22. The eastern boundary with the M6 Motorway (and the Birchills-Leamore Ward) should be maintained in its entirety, as the Boundary Commission have proposed.

23. The Southern Proposed Boundary on Clarkes Lane etc should be changed to follow the old railway line to the north of Durham Avenue, Slater Street and Honeybourne Way in the Willenhall/Willenhall South Ward. Farmbridge Close and Farmbridge Way (north of the old railway line) should be moved to Short Heath Ward.

24. To promote electoral balance and create consistency, both sides of Western Avenue should be moved into the Short Heath Ward. This would involve moving properties on the north side of Western Avenue from the current Bentley and Darlaston Ward to the Short Heath Ward, as well as Glenhurst Close.

25. Many of the streets in this particular area share names with streets in other parts of Short Heath, e.g. Linden Lane/Linden Close, again showing the connections between these areas.

26. The Commission have already proposed incorporating Overdale Drive and surrounding Streets into Short Heath, so it would make sense to incorporate the streets on the other side of Western Avenue. There is no clear boundary between these two sides.

27. Poplar Avenue, from the junction with Western Avenue to the junction of Granbourne Road should be moved to the Short Heath Ward due to close local connections and amenities and the natural link on Granbourne Road as I have described above.

28. Silverstone Close, Leyburn Close, Condover Close and Faversham Close should all be moved into the Short Heath Ward from the Bentley and Darlaston North Ward.

29. There is a gap in the houses and an alleyway on Poplar Avenue just before the junction with Monmouth Road which would function as a natural break between the two wards.

30. Bentley West Playing Field is a natural boundary between these new suggested parts of the Short Heath Ward and the Bentley area.

31. All of these areas are served by the 41 bus route which again connects these areas well.

32. I also believe that these suggestions work well statistically. Under the Boundary Commission's initial proposals, the variance for the Willenhall Ward is 6% above the average, meaning that some areas can be put back into this ward from the proposed Short Heath Ward. The Short Heath Ward is 1% above the variance meaning that it does not have to take on as many electors as proposed. The Bentley and Darlaston Ward is -4% from the variance, meaning that some electors can be moved to the Short Heath Ward. This means that all three wards would still meet the Commission's need for electoral balance.

33. If the Commission need to further decrease the size of the Willenhall Ward, I would argue that the Coronation Avenue and Riverbank areas should be moved to the Bentley and Darlaston North Ward as these have far greater connections to the Bentley area than to Short Heath or Willenhall, along Wolverhampton Road West.

Attached Documents:

- local-government-boundary-review.docx

Local Government Boundary Review – Walsall MBC

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Maps of my proposals

