

Gateshead

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Comment text:

Related subject: Ryton ward boundary changes (Gateshead Council)

Last night I chaired a hastily arranged meeting at Ryton Cricket Club to discuss your proposals. It was held at 5.30pm on a cold, damp day with less than 24 hours notice. Forty (yes, 40) very angry people turned up. Although there was a consultation period last summer on the councils proposals, none of us knew about it.

I have been involved in several local campaigns in Ryton (protecting the Green Belt from development, protecting rights of way) but I knew nothing about this until two days ago (April 1st) when a neighbour told me she had spotted something on social media. That is why you are receiving this submission at the very last moment. I know you expect councils to ensure people effected by these proposals are involved and that local councillors have a role to play in representing the views of local people. They have totally failed in their duty to do this.

At one point I referred to the council's conclusion that "Crawcrook and Ryton form a continuous community along the B6317 and Barmoor would have community ties in both directions". This statement caused much resentment and on a show of hands the suggestion was unanimously rejected. People in Barmoor have community ties with Ryton, not with Crawcrook. It was clear that councillors, under pressure to improve electoral equality, had failed in their duty to also consider the views of residents effected by the changes.

I have lived in Barmoor for 40 years and have absolutely no community ties to Crawcrook.

I am an active member of the local community group Brighten Ryton and for many years I have grown flowers from seed and planted up several flower beds in the centre (previously looked after by the council).

When the local pub (Ye Olde Cross) closed several years ago I gave financial support to a group wanting to re-open it as a community pub (which they did very successfully) and I now help to organise a weekly quiz there and I also support their Community Film Club. I never go to one of the many pubs in Crawcrook.

I was for many years a member of Ryton Labour Party. They regularly produce high quality leaflets on local issues, but have never mentioned proposed ward boundary changes.

The word Barmoor is used a lot in the context of these proposals but it is not a word that is in general use. I suspect that most people in Ryton wouldn't recognise it and if anyone asked me where I live I would say Ryton, not Barmoor. We are fortunate to have a strong sense of community here, but it is as part of Ryton, not as a separate community. Ryton Junior School playground is 30metres from my garden, Ryton Comprehensive School (Thorp Academy) is 150m away, Ryton Rugby Club is 200m away, Ryton Cricket Club is 300m away. We don't see ourselves as being on the edge of Ryton. We are an integral part of Ryton. People who live here are embedded in Ryton community and have very little affinity with Crawcrook.

A few years ago I read a Gateshead Council document about future development plans. They referred to the Green Belt area and fields between Ryton and Crawcrook stating that they performed an important function in maintaining the separation of two distinct communities. We are indeed two distinct communities and I want it to stay that way.

I have just spoken to my neighbour who has lived in this terrace for over 70 years. Perhaps out of modesty he omitted to tell you in his submission that for most of his life he has been connected both as a player and senior officer with Ryton Golf Club, Ryton Cricket Club and Ryton Rugby club. Another example of someone from Barmoor with deep roots in the Ryton community.

I know it is not easy to balance electoral equality with community ties but even at this late stage it is important that our voices are, at last, heard.

Attached Documents:

None attached