

Swindon

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Comment text:

Related subject: 'Queens Park' which should be 'Central'

Please accept our apologies for this late engagement. Swindon Civic Voice has been in a state of dormancy and is re-establishing itself after 22 years of activity in Swindon. This submission draws upon our deep understanding of Swindon's community map, and many submissions to public consultations.

As part of this re-organisation coming on the back of loss of our office and computer access during renovations of the Health Hydro, we have focussed only upon the town centre and the Heritage Action Zone in the recent year.

We are concerned that 'Queen's Park' as drawn is improperly named. This area includes the town centre and is better described as 'Central'. In the past, Central Ward was composed unsatisfactorily as 5 'scraps' of small area strung along the main railway line. It afforded poor representation, reflecting the lack of understanding of Swindon's community context of 'place' for many years postwar.

Now there is an opportunity to provide more coherence overall, and integrity for the town centre residents and users too.

Defining these boundaries appropriately could produce the representation that the severely challenged town centre needs as a physical place, but also for the increasing level of multiple occupation around the town centre, in midrise structures and over the shop accommodation.

There is local desire for the redevelopment area known now as 'Kimmerfields' (which is to be re-developed with denser housing) to be re-badged

as its original from pre-war: 'Queen's Ward' . This name should reserved for future use perhaps?

The boundaries of the tentative 'Queen's Ward' are as significant an issue. Swindon has just completed a 5-year Heritage Action Zone project with Historic England; this has brought a renewed understanding of the significance of the heritage of the area which the proposed western boundary arbitrarily splits across 2 wards. This is not helpful, as even before the HAZ the Village was experienced integrally by its social housing residents.

We assert our deep understanding and work with this Conservation Area; our efforts over 5 years led to its award by national Civic Voice as 'England's Favourite Conservation Area'.

One of the aims of the HAZ was to reconnect this Area with the town centre and the former Works site across the mainline. This work would be supported if the Conservation Area could be included as a whole (as it naturally was before unhelpful road schemes intervened in 1965-70).

We realise that the 10% standard population target is relevant, but we think balance might be struck on the under rather than higher level for a 'Central Ward'.

The stretch should include Rodbourne Road as far east as the canal footpath in Sheppard Street. The small neighbourhoods west of the Health Hydro in Milton Road (up to the canal) are more integral than the eastern patches taking in Queen's Park. An eastern oundary might be drawn to include the premises on both sides of Prince's Street and include the Civic Offices (a bit of an outlier, but a Central institution).The York St/Groundwell Road areas might be better included socially within the Walcot West ward? We suggest this as a method of balancing the population, not having access to the data.

If you find these suggestions unacceptable, given others' submissions, we would greatly appreciate an opportunity to confer with the Review Officer.

We want to be clear that the places and communities within central Swindon have been much altered since 1960, and not in a helpful way. This exercise could do much to help Swindon achieved a more understandable character for residents old and new. Swindon has been a town in permanent transition since its estalishment in 1841.

It is not an extension of the old town on the hill, but a 19th and 20th century creation of the industrial revolution. The 'Central Ward' would help to clarify that character as a new era is struggling to emerge in that same location.

Attached Documents:

None attached