

# Sandwell

## Personal Details:

**Name:** Sarah Coombes  
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**Postcode:** SW1A 0AA  
**Organisation Name:** (Member of Parliament)

## Comment text:

Dear team,

Please find attached a submission in relation to the ongoing consultation for the changes being proposed to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

Kind regards,

Sarah Coombes MP  
Member of Parliament for West Bromwich

## Attached Documents:

- submission-from-sarah-coombes-mp---sandwell-lgbce-review.docx

### **Submission from Sarah Coombes MP**

I have reviewed the proposed new ward boundaries from the Boundary Commission and note the criteria they use to require electoral equality, to support efficient and effective local government and to best reflect the interests and identities of local communities.

To that end, I would like to say I support the current proposals from the Boundary Commission with two exceptions. These are a minor change to the border between the proposed Oldbury Ward and the proposed St Pauls Ward, and the proposed Rowley Ward.

With regards to the border between St Pauls Ward and Oldbury Ward, the proposal to move a small section around West End Avenue into Oldbury Ward would not best reflect the interests and identities of the local community. The roads in question, which include George Betts School and Oldbury Road Jamia Masjid Mosque, are a natural part of the St Pauls, West Smethwick and Rood End communities, which are incorporated in the St Pauls Ward as proposed. They are separated from the rest of Oldbury Ward by the canal, the M5, and an area of industrial and light manufacturing estates. Moving them into a different ward and town (Sandwell Council has a sub-borough structure of six towns, the boundary in question is a town boundary as well as a ward one) would also throw up problems with local government administration, in particular as the Chance Brothers site – a site with a long and globally important industrial history in glassmaking, recently acquired by a local heritage trust to be turned into a mixed residential and heritage development – would be split in two by the proposed boundary. I would therefore propose that the boundary be moved back to the current boundary, which I believe would be more supportive of efficient and effective local government and better reflect the interests and identity of local communities without putting either ward out of scope on the electoral equality criteria.

With regards to the proposed new Rowley Ward, this is clearly not in the interests or identities of local communities, at all. It seems to have been created with the proposed new Cradley Heath Ward in mind and the two neighbouring wards of Rowley and Blackheath simply carved up to fit the numerical calculus without any reference to those local communities. The Brickhouse Farm area on the border with Dudley Borough is, by longstanding association, a part of Rowley. It has no association with Blackheath or Old Hill and is a considerable distance from the Blackheath town centre, without significant transport links. Similarly, the estate around Uplands Avenue and the estate around Majestic Way would both consider themselves to be a part of Blackheath, but are moved into Rowley Ward on these proposals.

I have been kept informed of the submission by the cross-party working group on behalf of Sandwell Council, and I would support the boundaries that they propose for Rowley Ward, as well as for Blackheath Ward and Cradley Heath and Old Hill Ward, with the dividing line between the Rowley and Blackheath Wards running along Highgate Street, Garrats Lane and Moor Lane. The proposal from the Council for this part of the Borough would, I believe, better meet the criteria of more efficient local government and better reflect the interests and identities of local government, whilst maintaining electoral equality, than the current proposal. I note that all the political groupings on Sandwell Council – Labour, Conservative, Green Party and Independent – have been involved in and support the Council's submission, and that the current proposal is based on a submission from a Conservative group and Councillor from outside the Borough. I would like to indicate a preference for a cross-party proposal submitted by representatives who live in and represent the area in question is a more accurate reflection of local feeling than a partisan submission from outside the Borough.