

Sandwell

Personal Details:

Name: Mr Gurinder Singh Josan
Email: gurinder.josan.mp@parliament.uk
Postcode: B68 0JT
Organisation Name: (Member of Parliament)

Comment text:

Related subject: Wards within the Smethwick Constituency

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In addition the local community looks to the amenities of Blackheath High St, including Rowley Regis Station (0.4 miles) and Blackheath Sainsbury's supermarket (0.7 miles), not to those of Langley such as Langley Green Station (1.9 miles) or the Langley Asda (1.3 miles). Additionally, the street has multiple young families because of the nature of the housing, and the children of the Avenue largely attend Blackheath Primary School, rather than Causeway Green School in Langley.

I consider the inclusion of Boundary Avenue into Langley Ward to be an historical lacuna caused by the need for electoral equality at the last boundary review. As the inclusion of the road into either Langley or Blackheath would not put either out of scope, I believe that the objectives of ensuring effective and convenient local government and representing the interests and identities of local communities mean that this change should be made.

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School premises between the A457 the railway line.

The proposal for the new boundary in the Commission's proposal, which is an amendment to the Council's original submission, is to create a salient running along the Birmingham Canal to the North as far as Spon Lane South, proceeding South down Spon Lane South as far as the railway line before turning Westward to rejoin the existing boundary. It is our belief that this will prejudice the Commission's stated objective of ensuring effective and convenient local government, as well as running counter to the interests and identities of local communities.

In consequence, we would suggest that this boundary continue along the existing boundary – specifically we propose that the boundary should run between the M5 and the A457 to the rear of Crystal Drive, then between Tram Way and Beresford Road and along the boundary of George Betts Primary School premises between the A457 the railway line.

We believe that it would be prejudicial to effective and convenient local government for several reasons. Firstly, this is also a boundary between the West Bromwich and Smethwick Parliamentary Constituencies. Whilst we acknowledge that coterminous boundaries do not form a legal requirement, we would argue that where the maintaining of these boundaries does not prejudice the other aims of the LGBCE review – delivering electoral equality and the interests and identities of local communities – the requirement for effective and convenient local government means they should be considered.

Effective local government requires councillors and MPs to work closely and collaboratively with each other. It is less convenient and therefore less effective to have wards across several constituencies. We recognise that this is sometimes inevitable to ensure electoral equality. However, that is not the case in this instance.

The council's figures show that the inclusion of the proposed roads around Crystal Drive in either Oldbury or St Paul's Ward would not move either out of scope in either incidence.

It is not only that maintaining the Ward and Parliamentary Constituency boundaries as coterminous would ease the effective administration of local government, but also that the proposal for this produces three anomalies which would be actively detrimental to effective administration. The first relates to the former Chance Brothers Factory Site, which straddles the canal between Crystal Drive and Palace Drive. This former glass factory was responsible for the production of the glass for the Crystal Palace, which is the origin of the names of the two roads within the site. As the factory straddled the canal there are a total of four bridges across the canal to link the site together in the few hundred yards between Spon Lane South and the M5, integrating the site across the proposed border. The site has been acquired by the Chance Heritage Trust, which intends to turn it into a community centre and residential development. That development would – under these proposals – be split between the two wards. The site is also of great importance for the industrial heritage of the area, and indeed of the UK. Chance Brothers not only produced the glass for the Crystal Palace, but also for the windows in both the Houses of Parliament and the American White House as well as the lenses and glasswork for over 4,000 lighthouses globally. For that reason, the community centre aspect is also slated to include heritage assets and a museum, which again would be split across not only two separate wards, but also across two of the Council's Towns which form it's sub-Borough structure. This would lead to a split in the funding and oversight mechanisms of the Council for this site. As a heritage asset recognised by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England and the Victorian Society, this situation of confused lines of reporting and discussion within the Council would be detrimental to the Council's standing and governance.

The second anomaly is the splitting of West End Avenue and George Betts Primary School from the natural populace that attends that school. The road and school would be cut off from the rest of the Oldbury Ward by the Springfield Industrial Estate, St Martin's Industrial Estate and

Oldbury Industrial Estate, the M5, Birmingham Main Line Canal, A457 and the railway line. For this reason the children who attend George Betts School are drawn almost exclusively from St Pauls Ward and the rest of Smethwick as an area. Removing this would mean that the school was in a different ward and also a different sub-Borough administrative unit in the form of Towns to its pupil population. This would not be conducive to effective and convenient local government for the school, local residents or the elected members or officers of the Council.

We also believe that it would be confusing for residents. The area in question is the border of the historic Oldbury and Smethwick towns, which merged because of urban sprawl in the 19th and early 20th centuries. This can be seen from the fact that Oldbury Cemetery and West Smethwick Park border each other. However, West End Avenue forms part of the West Smethwick residential area surrounding the main St Paul's Road B4169 (from which St Paul's Ward gets its name). Residents identify more with the West Smethwick and Rood End areas – both in St Paul's Ward – than they do with Oldbury, in particular as they are separated from any residential areas Oldbury by the three industrial estates mentioned above, as well as the Canal and M5 motorway. The geography of the area, with large light industrial areas, main roads including the M5 and the canal and railway line separating the area from Oldbury town centre mean that the facilities and amenities the local residents use are those of the Smethwick area. Whilst the area is on the border of the two towns we believe that moving it from the St Paul's Ward to the Oldbury Ward would be counter to the interests and identities of the local community.

A further manifestation of this would be in the provision of a polling station for the residents of this area. The residents of the West End Avenue and 56 – 65 Mallin Street currently benefit from a polling station within walking distance at the local community centre. Moving these residents into the Oldbury Ward would mean they would be required to use a polling station that is located some distance away, or would require the residents of West End Avenue to use a polling station across the industrial estates and motorway, or the provision of a separate polling station for that small group of residents only. All of these would make the administration of local elections more complex and inefficient.

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For these reasons we would strongly urge the Commission to set the boundary between these two proposed wards along the current existing boundary, south from the M5 to the A457 to the rear of Crystal Drive, then between Tram Way and Beresford Road and along the boundary of George Betts Primary School premises between the A457 the railway line.

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Conservatives.

I am aware that my colleague Alex Ballinger MP will be submitting a response on the problems the proposal creates for the residents of the Cradley Heath and Old Hill area by the proposals, so will focus on the issues for Blackheath Ward, which forms a part of my Constituency. The borders proposed in the Commissions current iteration spread Blackheath Ward across to the area around Brickhouse Farm and the border with Dudley Borough. This area has no historical connection to the Blackheath area, nor to Old Hill, and identifies with Rowley. In addition, the proposal to include a section of Old Hill, which splits the Beechcroft Road/Lawrence Lane estate in half down the line of Lawrence Lane would divide an historically unified community, as well as removing half the residents of the estate from sharing a ward with the amenities of Old Hill High Street, as well as removing the other half from amenities such as Cradley Heath Library.

In addition, the peculiar bulge around the Waterfall Lane estate is extremely detrimental to the interests and identities of local communities. This area is an integral part of the Blackheath area, and always has been. Whilst these areas have merged due to urban sprawl, the divide between the Waterfall Lane area and the Cradley Heath and Old Hill area dates back to the 19th Century construction of the railway line and the Dudley No. 2 canal. Waterfall Lane is only 0.4miles from the amenities of Blackheath town centre, but 1.6 miles from Cradley Heath town centre.

Finally, the proposal is detrimental to the Commission's stated objective of ensuring effective and convenient local government. It is already difficult and confusing both to residents and officers that the Blackheath Ward is divided between two Parliamentary constituencies. The current proposal would divide it amongst three. Whilst the Parliamentary boundaries are not a consideration, it does have a detrimental impact on effective and convenient local government.

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Attached Documents:

- submission-from-gurinder-singh-josan-mp.docx

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Sandwell

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Email: COLYERL@parliament.uk
Postcode: B68 0JT
Organisation Name: (Member of Parliament)

Comment text:

Dear Colleague,

I attach a letter from Mr Josan for your attention.

Attached Documents:

- boundaries.pdf



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Tel: 0207 219 7711

Email: colyerl@parliament.uk

GSJ/LC

12th May 2025

Sent by email – reviews@lgbce.org.uk

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The second area of concern for me is the proposal for Blackheath Ward. I note that the Commission has adopted a proposal submitted by a Conservative Councillor and Group in a neighbouring Borough who neither live in nor represents the area. This has created a series of problems with the Commission's stated objective of ensuring effective and convenient local government, or the interests and identities of local communities. The proposal from the Conservative Group seems to have been made with an eye on the next boundary review for Halesowen Parliamentary Constituency – which includes Cradley Heath and Old Hill Ward. I also note that the Sandwell Conservative Councillor Group were involved in the Cross-Party Working Group, voted in favour of the Council's original proposal and have also, via the leader of the opposition Councillor William Gill, supported the Council's response to this latest consultation, which does not support the proposal from the Dudley Borough based Halesowen Conservatives.

I am aware that my colleague Alex Ballinger MP will be submitting a response on the problems the proposal creates for the residents of the Cradley Heath and Old Hill area by the proposals, so will focus on the issues for Blackheath Ward, which forms a part of my Constituency. The borders proposed in the Commissions current iteration spread Blackheath Ward across to the area around Brickhouse Farm and the border with Dudley Borough. This area has no historical connection to the Blackheath area, nor to Old Hill, and identifies with Rowley. In addition, the proposal to include a section of Old Hill, which splits the Beechcroft Road/Lawrence Lane estate in half down the line of Lawrence Lane would divide an historically unified community, as well as removing half the residents of the estate from sharing a ward with the amenities of Old Hill High Street, as well as removing the other half from amenities such as Cradley Heath Library.

In addition, the peculiar bulge around the Waterfall Lane estate is extremely detrimental to the interests and identities of local communities. This area is an integral part of the Blackheath area, and always has been. Whilst these areas have merged due to urban sprawl, the divide between the Waterfall Lane area and the Cradley Heath and Old Hill area dates back to the 19th Century construction of the railway line and the Dudley No. 2 canal. Waterfall Lane is only 0.4 miles from the amenities of Blackheath town centre, but 1.6 miles from Cradley Heath town centre.

Finally, the proposal is detrimental to the Commission's stated objective of ensuring effective and convenient local government. It is already difficult and confusing both to residents and officers that the Blackheath Ward is divided between two Parliamentary constituencies. The current proposal would divide it amongst three. Whilst the Parliamentary boundaries are not a consideration, it does have a detrimental impact on effective and convenient local government. I am in agreement with the Council's most recent submission, that an appropriate natural and recognisable boundary to define a new Blackheath Ward would be Throne Road and the Oldbury Road. These are main roads, major bus routes and main routes for both cars and pedestrians into Blackheath Town Centre. Multiple smaller pedestrian walkways link the communities within these boundaries to the Blackheath train station, which also reinforces the cohesion of a single local community – Blackheath – through retail, transport and amenities links.



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For the same reason I also support the Council's suggestion to run the boundary between the proposed Blackheath Ward and Rowley Ward to include Highgate Street from the traffic island incorporating Garrats Lane, maintaining Moor Lane as natural boundary. This maintains a strong and cohesive local community, centred around key amenities and parks, that better reflect the local community.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Gurinder Singh Josan CBE, MP,
Smethwick.