

York

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Comment text:

Good afternoon,

Although I tried to submit the attached objection to the proposed changes to the ward boundary of Rural West York using the online form, I am not sure I was successful.

I am therefore sending you my objection in the attachment to this email.

I apologise for any duplication.

Kind regards

Anne

Cllr Anne Hook
Liberal Democrat councillor for Rural West York
City of York Council

Attached Documents:

- jah-objection-to-proposed-changes-to-ward-boundaries.docx

Dear Boundary Commission

I was extremely surprised and disappointed to see the Commission's draft proposals for Rural West York ward.

As its name suggests, Rural West York lies in the rural outskirts of York, with seven strong village communities that share common interests and face very different issues and challenges from those experienced in the urban parts of the city. Although the ward currently sits slightly below the average electors-per-councillor ratio, there are no neighbouring communities with similar identities that could sensibly be added. I had therefore assumed the ward would remain unchanged.

Instead, the Commission proposes to remove part of the ward, splitting established communities while moving the electors-per-councillor ratio even further away from the city average. This appears to run contrary to the very purpose of the review.

The current boundary between Poppleton and Acomb has remained unchanged since the creation of City of York Council in 1995. Contrary to the Commission's suggestion, it has not been overtaken or distorted by development. The Langley Gate estate sits away from the existing boundary. The properties lying along the boundary remain within Knapton except Villa Court which is in Upper Poppleton, and all of these homes were built when this area formed part of the former Harrogate district.

History matters in York, and it matters equally in Rural West York. Poppleton has a strong history society and Rufforth with Knapton has a historical archive which has been curated for years and is now finding a new home.

Although the Portal and Trenchard Road area is physically separate from Knapton village, it has a strong and distinctive identity rooted in the history of Rufforth Airfield. At the June meeting of Rufforth with Knapton Parish Council, a resident explained how the roads commemorate two of the RAF's most distinguished figures. Marshal of the RAF Hugh Montague Trenchard laid the foundations of the Royal Air Force and successfully fought to prevent its disbandment after the First World War. Marshal of the RAF Charles Portal became Chief of the Air Staff in 1940 and led the RAF throughout much of the

Second World War. The houses themselves were originally built for RAF families, and many long-standing residents continue to value that shared history and have strong ties with Rufforth and Knapton.

Residents of this part of Knapton also strongly identify with the area's rural character. Green space dominates the local environment, and ward funding helped provide the community noticeboard. Local residents and ward councillors worked together successfully to protect the Green Belt between Trenchard Road and Wheatlands from development. They rightly question whether councillors representing an urban Acomb ward would share the same commitment to protecting this rural Green Belt, especially because it lies outside the proposed Acomb West boundary.

At the June meeting of Upper Poppleton Parish Council, a resident of Villa Court explained that they identify with Poppleton rather than Acomb. They described feeling physically detached from Acomb because the Low Poppleton Lane bus gate prevents convenient access to Boroughbridge Road by car and carries a £75 penalty for unauthorised vehicles. Their social and community ties are firmly rooted in Poppleton; indeed, I first met friends who live there through Poppleton Players, sadly disbanded since COVID.

The same point applies to those residents of Langley Gate who have vehicle access to Millfield Lane. The bus gate reinforces their sense that they are not part of Acomb. They have common issues with the other residents and businesses along Millfield Lane, which remains in Rural West York. Better to have just one set of councillors helping with casework matters such as access to the A1237 at busy times, potholes, parking at the start and close of the school day and, in future, disruption when the former British Sugar site is developed.

Nineteen residents of Langley Gate attended the June meeting of Upper Poppleton Parish Council. Every one of them described themselves as being part of the Poppleton community. Some had deliberately moved there because they already had family connections in Poppleton, something which has become even more important to residents since the COVID pandemic.

One resident summed up the strength of feeling perfectly, saying:

"We use Poppleton Station, our dentist is in Poppleton and we go to the pub in Poppleton."

Residents from the older parts of Poppleton have equally embraced Langley Gate as part of their community. Centrepiece, the magazine produced by the Poppleton Centre, is now delivered to every household on the estate so that residents are aware of local events, activities and news from both parish councils. Significant investment has recently been made in the Poppleton Centre itself, which is now much larger to meet the needs of the increased population.

Residents living in the older properties immediately inside the Outer Ring Road also made clear their strong identification with Poppleton. One resident, who has lived in his home for 53 years, was keen to explain the history of his property and the surrounding homes, describing them as an integral part of the two Poppletons long before the villages effectively grew together. I was introduced to one of his close neighbours at one of the community events on Poppleton Village Green, when the whole village turns out and has a wonderful time. She is a retired teacher and one of her ex-pupils, who is a Nether Poppleton Parish Councillor, was keen for me to meet someone who had influenced her so positively.

Beyond the obvious concern about dividing established communities, I also have concerns about the practical consequences of these proposals over the coming years.

The Commission should carefully consider the implications for parish warding. Any changes to the principal authority ward boundary may have significant consequences for the future warding arrangements of the parish councils, including aspirations to create a single unwarded parish council for Poppleton. No one knows what the conclusions of any Corporate Governance Review might be. There are also wider implications for how data is collected, analysed and used in future decision-making, given that so much information is organised on a ward basis.

These proposals therefore create unnecessary complexity and uncertainty for no clear public benefit and do not promote effective or convenient local government.

The Commission has an opportunity to avoid dividing long-established communities, preserve effective local representation, maintain stable parish arrangements and avoid making the electors-per-councillor ratio even less equal than it is today.

For all of these reasons, I strongly urge the Commission to retain the existing Rural West York ward boundaries.