

Darlington

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Comment text:

Related subject: Proposed Albert Hill, Hundens and Red Hall Ward

I am writing to object to the proposed creation of the Albert Hill, Hundens and Red Hall ward and to urge the Commission to reconsider its boundaries in order to better reflect established communities and strengthen local representation.

One of the Commission's key objectives is to create wards that reflect community identity and cohesion. In this regard, the proposed ward falls short. It combines communities that have little in common while failing to recognise the strong ties that already exist between others.

The communities of Central Park and Lingfield share common interests, similar local concerns and a stronger sense of community identity with one another than either does with Albert Hill or Red Hall. Residents of these areas use many of the same local facilities, experience similar issues and view themselves as part of a distinct part of Darlington. By contrast, there is little natural community connection between Central Park and Lingfield and the communities of Albert Hill and Red Hall.

The proposed ward would therefore create an artificial grouping that lacks a clear community focus. Effective ward boundaries should reflect how people live their lives, where they access services, and the communities with which they identify. The proposed arrangement does not achieve this and instead risks weakening the representation of communities whose interests differ significantly from those of Albert Hill and Red Hall.

The proposed ward name further highlights this problem. Despite accounting for a substantial proportion, and indeed the majority, of the ward's population, neither Central Park nor Lingfield are recognised in the ward title. The omission of both communities suggests that their identity and

interests are secondary within the proposed ward structure. It is difficult to argue that a ward reflects community identity when two of its largest constituent communities are not acknowledged in its name.

There is also a concern that residents of Lingfield and Central Park would continue to be overlooked within such a large and geographically diverse ward. Many residents already feel that local political attention is focused elsewhere, particularly on Red Hall, and there is a risk that this imbalance would be reinforced under the Commission's proposals.

A more logical and community-focused solution would be to use Tornado Way as the ward boundary. This would create a single-member Albert Hill and Red Hall ward and a two-member Central Park and Lingfield ward.

Such an arrangement would better reflect the reality of local communities. A Central Park and Lingfield ward would unite two areas with genuine social and community links, while an Albert Hill and Red Hall ward would bring together neighbourhoods with a stronger shared identity. This would create clearer, more coherent boundaries that residents can understand and identify with.

Most importantly, it would ensure that residents of Central Park and Lingfield receive focused representation from councillors whose attention is centred on the issues affecting their communities, rather than being absorbed into a ward whose identity and priorities lie elsewhere.

I therefore urge the Commission to reconsider the proposed Albert Hill, Hundens and Red Hall ward and instead adopt a boundary along Tornado Way, creating separate wards that better reflect community identity, improve representation and strengthen local cohesion.

Attached Documents:

None attached