

Submission by Denise Craghill, Vice-Chair, York Green Party to the York Boundary Commission Review 2026 (stage 2 consultation)

We have some serious concerns regarding the proposal to put Fishergate and Fulford wards together as one single 3 member ward. The two wards currently have very different and distinct community identities and different ways of delivering local government services – Fulford being a parished, more rural ward, while Fishergate is un-parished with a largely urban identity.

Community identity

- The Fulford ward, with current boundaries that mostly follow the parish council boundaries, is made up primarily of Fulford Village with respect to both the built-up area and the vast majority of the population of the ward. The village, which straddles the old Roman route into the city centre, has a history as a planned village that goes back as far as the twelfth century.
- Whilst more recent developments have meant that the village is now loosely attached to the city suburbs, the special character and form of the medieval village remains today and this continued village identity is highly valued by many residents and acknowledged in the most recent Fulford Conservation Areas Appraisal. It is generally delineated to the north by the parish boundary.
- The proposed 3 member ward includes a patchwork of different character areas from edge of city centre housing and apartment blocks/student residences in the north, through tightly packed terraces and suburban areas in the centre to an edge of built up area historic village and a large rural area in the south – a very wide mix of identities.
- The commissioners appear to suggest that the use of the word ‘Fulford’ in the southern and central parts of Fishergate ward can be seen as evidence that the area can comfortably be regarded as one and the same. We and many residents would disagree with this view. Historically,

the boundaries of the manor of Fulford did indeed change over time and at one time did reach to the city walls, probably contributing to the widespread use of the name, Fulford, but this was centuries ago. It does not reflect the current situation in the 21st century when the form of the medieval village not only persists but operates in practice as a village on the edge of the city, with a rural boundary to the south. It has a very different identity to the generally far more urban Fishergate ward, in keeping with its status as a parished area.

- We do not believe that the naming of the Fulford Arms (known as the Barrack Tavern prior to 1976 when it was renamed out of concern for terrorist bombings of pubs with military associations) has any particular significance today – it is after all located on ‘Fulford Road’ – the road that leads to Fulford, just as many urban roads are named to reflect their destination. Additionally, the Fulford Arms currently operates mainly as ticketed music venue rather than a community hub for Fishergate or Fulford. Fulford Village itself has 2 busy public houses on its Main Street (The Plough and the Saddle), along with a wine bar, so villagers do not generally see the Fulford Arms as their ‘local’ or community hub.

- It also has its own thriving community centre in the Fulford Social Hall on School Lane. The main community centre in Fishergate is the Melbourne Centre at the end of Escrick Street, whilst Fishergate has its own cafes along Fulford Road and its continuation, Fishergate, and several other pubs close to the city walls. The tightly packed Victorian terraced streets running down to the riverside have their own very special character. Fishergate also has pubs and cafes along Heslington Road and Lawrence Street, covering that part of the ward. The area around Heslington Road and Lawrence Street has a significant student population and is literally and psychologically far from Fulford village when considering both community facilities and community identity. The western part, at least, of Heslington Road, however, does have a clear affinity with historical Fishergate and present day identities. The present day residents group for the terraced streets off Heslington Road, for example, calls itself the Redfearn Group after the old Glassworks that used to stand on the site of the Novotel off

Fishergate itself. Many of the workers at the Glassworks which closed down in 1983, lived in those terraced streets.

- We are not sure where the commissioners are referring to when they refer to the 'Fulford Club'? Does this mean the 'Fulfordgate Club & Institute' – this is clearly within the current Parish Boundary and within the current ward of Fulford & Heslington. Or does it mean the Fulford District Conservative Club on the corner of Fulford Road and Cemetery Road? This is clearly in Fishergate Ward, north of the parish boundary but it is also clearly a political club serving a wider district, so we would suggest not relevant in this context – it is again on Fulford Road – the road that leads to Fulford. Or does it mean the 'Fulford Club' which is part of Fulford Golf Club and is currently in the Fulford and Heslington ward part way between Fulford and Heslington villages (in Heslington Parish)?
- Whilst we acknowledge that the exact boundary between Fishergate and Fulford doesn't benefit from an obvious natural feature such as a river or beck, or a piece of infrastructure such as a railway line, we feel that the character and identity of the two wards does change in the area around the current boundary. Consistency with the parish boundary would seem to be the best practical option, which is why in our previous submission we suggested moving the north side of Heslington Lane and east end of Broadway (polling district ODB) back into Fishergate ward in keeping with the parish boundary.

Effective local government

- We believe that the proposal to combine a parished area with a non-parished area (which is also twice its size in terms of population) is seriously problematic. It would bring serious challenges for elected representatives and City of York Council with respect to issues around the overall upkeep of the two wards. There would be a lot of potential for perceptions of unfairness between voters in different parts of the proposed ward – on the one hand some having to pay a parish precept whilst other do not; on the other hand some receiving services such as improvements to the public realm, whilst others do not.

- Some residents would have the option, in addition to approaching their ward councillors, to take grievances or suggestions for improvement to an elected parish council made up of local residents and neighbours, whilst others would not.
- Fulford Parish Council currently uses the additional precept it receives from Fulford parish residents (alongside income and grant funding this allows it to generate) to run a much-valued village community hall, two village playgrounds and the Fulford Cemetery. It supports a well-attended traditional Annual Show, as well as carrying out public realm improvements via it's Fulford Cemetery staff and delivering other projects. Elected City of York Council representatives for a combined Fishergate and Fulford Ward would be faced with explaining to residents in the northern two thirds of the ward why some services can be provided to a higher standard at one end of the ward compared to the other end, which would not support effective local government. Whilst it is our view that parishing of the central unparished areas in York should be seriously considered in future, this is a separate issue and even with a broad consensus to do so could take some considerable time to deliver.
- Further perceptions of unfairness would also be encouraged by the fact that the electorate in the northern more urban and more transient part of the ward would be twice as big as the electorate in the southern third and could therefore be perceived as having more influence.
- Another result of the proposed three member ward would also be that the residents in the ward would be represented by 3 ward councillors, 2 Members of Parliament and (partially by one parish council – a very confusing situation for all concerned).

With all the above in mind we believe the proposed 3 member ward is very problematic.

What's in a name?

Should the commissioners still decide to go ahead with the 3 member ward option, we are also of the view that 'Fishergate and Fulford' would be the

more appropriate name – reflecting the fact that Fishergate represents a far higher proportion of voters in the suggested new ward.

Our alternative proposals

The existing Fulford Ward boundary, once Heslington parish is moved to the new university ward, would have 3535 electors in 2031 which is almost exactly the target number for a single member ward.

It therefore makes sense to keep the Fulford ward intact and distinct. The Fishergate ward would be slightly too large in terms of electors, which could be rectified by moving part of polling district CCA east of Farrar Street and primarily fronting Lawrence Street into the Heslington and University ward (around 900 electors). The eastern part of polling district CCA fronting Lawrence Street comprises primarily student accommodation and so is closely linked with the university.

If the result is that Heslington and University is slightly oversized, the portion of polling district CGA north of Hull road (roughly 700 electors) could then be moved into Tang Hall and Derwenthorpe, which would address that ward's 500 elector shortfall and result in the ward boundary falling entirely along Hull Rd which is a natural barrier. Heslington and University would see a net increase of 200-300 electors which would bring it to target size, while the resultant Fishergate ward would be reduced by 900-1000 electors resulting in roughly 7,100-7,200 electors in 2031 which is very close to the target for a 2 member ward.

An alternative would be to form a single member ward from Fulford and Naburn parishes, while moving polling district ODB (north side of Heslington Lane and roads off and east end of Broadway and roads off) back into Fishergate ward. This would form a similarly ideally sized single member ward of Fulford and Naburn with 3557 electors which would have

a common rural and edge of urban area identity, be entirely parished, form a natural community and sit entirely within a single parliamentary constituency. This would also reduce the oversize of the proposed Derwent ward. Similar to the above proposal, the Fishergate ward would need to be reduced by moving part of polling district DA into the Heslington and University ward.

Both these proposals would provide for a single member village/rural ward with almost the exact average number of electors and a two-member urban ward of the desirable size and maintain the distinct character of these communities. This clearly demonstrates that the optimal way to address the size of the Fishergate ward is to adjust its northern boundary rather than attempting to subsume Fulford.

Comments on the overall proposals with respect to the effective and appropriate running of the council

We also want to register our concern about the proposal to move to an even number of councillors (48 councillors rather than 47). Our concern is that having an even number of councillors creates the potential for significant decision-making power to be placed in the hands of a largely ceremonial mayor who is not in any way directly elected to that role by the electorate.

The Lord Mayor of York takes on the role in accordance with an allocation of points reflecting the number of councillors from each party serving on the council. It is therefore generally mostly occupied in alternate years by a councillor either from the ruling party or the main opposition group but can also on occasion be allocated to a minority party or an independent. City of York Council has been increasingly closely 'hung' and there is very real potential for that to be the case in future.

The largely ceremonial Lord Mayor is also the chair of council with the power to use their casting vote as well as their own vote when votes are tied. This is a necessary stop gap to be used on infrequent occasions to

enable business to be done. But in the entirely possible situation where councillors are split politically 24:24, enabling the possibility of a situation where whoever happens to be Mayor that year will time after time make the final decision on Executive recommendations and other matters that must be decided by Council would be undermining the constitution and proper functioning of the council.

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