

Southampton City Council

Personal Details:

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Organisation Name: SO18 Big Local

Comment text:

This response is from SO18 Big Local, which is a resident led community group in the Townhill Park, Harefield and Midanbury area of Southampton. We have been active for 9 years and during this time have become recognised by residents and authorities alike as a group that through our knowledge, networks, activities and communications are able to articulate and respond to the needs and interests of residents. Please see <https://so18biglocal.org.uk/> At its meeting on 12th January the SO18 Big Local partnership committee resolved to make a response to the ward boundary consultation. We propose that the boundary between the existing Bitterne Park and Harefield wards is changed. The current boundary bisects the Townhill Park estate in two, at the junction of Meggeson Avenue with Wakefield Road and with Cutbush Lane. Meggeson Avenue runs from a bus turning circle at its junction with Forest Hills Drive (where an art feature signpost marks the entrance to the area) up to the junction with Townhill Way. Meggeson Avenue is Townhill Park estate's spine road yet half is in one ward and half is in the other. The estate was originally built as council housing and it is currently in the midst of the largest scale estate regeneration scheme in Southampton for decades. Through the redevelopment around 450 homes (which means all the old blocks of flats) will be demolished to be replaced by around 675 new homes. One of the first phases of the redevelopment was to upgrade the whole length of Meggeson Avenue (with common features) which again demonstrates its cohesive significance. The first newly constructed block of the redevelopment programme is now occupied at the junction of Meggeson Avenue and Townhill Way (Roundhill Close). The next phase is for building on 'plots 2,9 and 10' for which a design and build contract with a single contractor is in place. Plot 2 (junction Meggeson and Townhill Way) is in Harefield Ward, whilst Plots 9 (by Ozier Road) and 10 (Copse Road) are in Bitterne Park ward. As the redevelopment continues this split continues, with some plots in Harefield Ward and others in Bitterne Park ward. As far as residents and agencies are concerned Townhill Park is a single place, the current ward boundary division is a confusing anomaly. Townhill Park has a Community Centre (corner of Cutbush Lane, just within the Bitterne Park Ward), whilst 2 minutes walk away are the two Townhill Park schools (entrances in Harefield Ward). The schools are on the boundary with Eastleigh but are administered through Southampton City Council, with Townhill Junior School subject to an imminent rebuilding plan. The new Townhill Green park is in Ozier Road, Bitterne Park ward, but built to serve the whole of Townhill Park. Currently the NW boundary of Harefield ward with Bitterne Park ward is a short stretch of Cutbush Lane, then Meggeson Avenue, and then Wakefield Road until its junction with Witts Hill. Wakefield Road is a weak boundary, housing in the roads on either side are in the main similar, with one street, Cleveland Road, continuing over it. We think that a much stronger boundary in terms of identity and interests would be to move the boundary between the two wards to Townhill Way. The new Bitterne Park boundary would then extend up the line with Eastleigh as far as Townhill Way. Then go south along Townhill Way to the roundabout at the West End Road junction (a strong local feature) and then be drawn in a westerly direction along Mousehole Lane just as far as the junction with Witts Hill, which then links to the existing Witts Hill boundary. All these roads are 'strong' in terms of divisions between distinct areas. It makes sense for this newly included extended area to become part of the Bitterne Park ward. It all 'looks' to Bitterne Park, for example the local secondary school is Bitterne Park School, the frequent 7 bus service goes through Bitterne Park Triangle (shops etc), Riverside Park is a well used recreation area for the whole neighbourhood. As well as making more sense in geographic terms we also think that this change is important for effective local government and the role of the elected councillors. At present Townhill Park estate, with its current hugely impactful issue of the redevelopment, plus also the probable rebuilding of its junior school, is represented by 6 councillors, three from each of the wards. However, in terms of overall size, Townhill Park makes up quite a small element of each ward, without 'ownership' within one ward's remit. This means that we and other organisations need to be talking to 6 councillors. An example of this is in relation to

the Townhill Park Regeneration Forum. This Forum brings together residents' groups, senior city council officers and councillors and representatives of other local organisations, meeting every 3 months. SO18 Big Local provides the administrative work for the Forum, it was set up in 2015 and has now met 23 times. Its terms of reference states that the membership includes the local councillors, which means that for each meeting all 6 local councillors are invited, as the local elected representatives, but we think that the area would be more effectively represented if Townhill Park was clearly within one ward and one set of councillor's remit. The obvious ward to become part of is Bitterne Park ward, with which there is much more synergy than with the other parts of Harefield ward. As far the number of Councillors is concerned, we note that the projected population of Harefield Ward is more than that of Bitterne Park ward, hopefully giving scope for this proposed redrawing of the boundaries.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded