

## Southampton City Council

### Personal Details:

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**Organisation Name:** Outer Avenue Residents' Association - OARA Southampton

### Comment text:

OARA, the Outer Avenue Residents' Association wishes to make a case for the area of Southampton known as Outer Avenue, and which currently lies wholly in the Bevois Ward, to be retained as an identifiable, undivided area within the new ward boundary proposals for the City, be that as part of the proposed Bevois or Portswood Wards. We have consulted widely with local residents, both through emailings and an open members' meeting. There was a unanimous view that residents wished the area to remain an identifiable whole. Current proposals would cut it in two along Avenue Rd. The area is bounded by The Avenue to the West, Lodge Road to the South, Portswood Road to the East and Gordon Avenue to the North. We have attached a the current OARA leaflet \* which shows both the geographical entity of the area as well as the extent of community activities and cohesion. Our reasons for our request and alternative proposal, taking account of the criteria set out by the Boundary Commission, are: Lodge Road, to the south, is a "strong, easily identifiable boundary" and a logical ward boundary choice if changes have to be made. It is a main traffic and transport artery and the divide between the Inner and Outer Avenue areas and Residents' Associations (RAs). The proposed new boundary of Avenue Rd is a narrow, residential road and would cut off an illogical sliver from an existing geographically and socially coherent area, where neighbours either side of the road know each other. That is not the case for Lodge Road which has many businesses and an overwhelmingly transient population. Brookvale Rd to the north is also a more significant traffic artery and transport route. The area described is an "Existing Community": the Outer Avenue, as shown in our attached leaflet has a strong community identity, which has been worked at by local residents, not least by OARA over more than ten years. Greening, street cleaning, meet your neighbour street parties, liaison with the Council, landlord and student population, the university, the police have all contributed to a sense of neighbourhood, which would be significantly weakened by the current proposals. Being part of one Council ward rather than split across two definitely contributes to more "effective and convenient local government". OARA has a strong working relationship with its 3 Councillors, who attend meetings, know the local issues and represent us well. Maintaining this pattern would be far more likely to "help the council deliver effective and convenient local government". Working with two sets of councillors would create more complex lines of communication and action, as well as potential duplication - and be less streamlined and effective. The coincidence of our RA and ward boundaries makes political, social as well as geographical sense. All our local Councillors are in agreement with this. The geographical and political coherence would also have a clarity which would be more likely to encourage participation in local democracy and elections. A different ward and councillors and possibly polling station, on either side of one narrow currently unified residential street, would not foster this. Historical identity: the area has a strong historical identity, based on the almost 300-year-old Bevois Mount House Estate whose entrance was the Lodge Rd Stag Gates. The history of the area is celebrated through our linked Bevois Mount History Group- and immediately apparent from the murals, signs and blue plaques which enhance the area. We understand the need for broadly numerical parity and electoral equality across Council wards. We believe, however, that there is scope to still achieve this with slight adjustments and within the margin of tolerance for each ward. We, therefore, request that the proposed boundary along Avenue Road is removed in favour of a boundary which reflects and respects existing communities, interests and identities and makes greater social, practical and political sense. \* Re current OARA information leaflet : the PDF version is 5.06MB , a fraction over the uploadable limit. We have therefore sent this version by separate email as per the advice provided, but also uploaded online a photograph showing both sides of our leaflet. It provides important evidence to support our submission. Further information about OARA can be found at our website [www.outeravenueresidents.co.uk](http://www.outeravenueresidents.co.uk) but please note it has been in the process of renewal and an updated version is due to be launched shortly.

