

Wolverhampton City Council

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Comment text:

To whom it may concern: I am a resident of Penn and a parishioner of St Michael's, Penn. Can the proposal to re-draw ward boundaries be altered to allow St Michael's church to remain attached to Penn? The hiving off of St Michael's church from Penn by the proposed changes to the boundaries of Penn ward, Wolverhampton, particularly concerns me because being part of Penn and its life has been core to St Michael's church life for decades. It appears that the commission has either ignored or not been concerned with local identities. The southern side of Coalway Road has been proposed to provide an irregular boundary behind properties whose own integrity changes (Warstones School, remaining in Penn, is built on land adjacent to and formerly belonging to St Michael's church). Using the centre of Coalway Road as in normal practice would be straightforward; perhaps only the few properties west of the church would be involved in a straightening of a short section of the proposed boundary (a couple of local, independent businesses as well as seven dwellings). The churches in Penn have worked together on many initiatives, which led in the 1980s to St. Bartholomew's Church (Anglican), St Michael's Roman Catholic Church, Penn United Reformed Church and Springdale Methodist Church entering into a formal Covenant -agreed by their hierarchies- to work closely together. These days this is seen as an old fashioned arrangement; the Local "Churches Together" format (which allows a greater voice to less hierarchical churches such as Penn Christian Centre on Warstones Road) was being explored by those "Four Churches of Penn" just before the pandemic . Congregations within Penn have hosted each other regularly for decades eg a series of "Prayers for Penn" just before the pandemic. Events – not just church services - were – promoted and appeared) in the "Newsletter of the Four Churches of Penn": the hustings they together call for general elections, the Millennial fireworks they arranged as well as the Jubilee 2000 " Drop the Debt" campaign, Crib and Christmas Tree Festivals run by the four churches with local groups and schools participating, an exhibition on Refugees, study groups with members from different denominations. Four newsletters a year for the nearly twenty years (before Covid 19 arrived and impacted distribution) informed people in Penn about even more common activity and causes. Penn Puppets – offering a free service for schools – is an ecumenical initiative that, centred in Penn and its people, is now used across the City. Organisation across Penn involved so many local people in these churches: all streets in Penn received a locally produced card delivered by local volunteers to greet them each Easter and Christmas – until the pandemic meant that caution about visiting/touching unknown places brought a pause. Because of the pandemic common activity founded on church links has necessarily been curtailed: but not ceased. The sharing of the collection of food primarily for foodbanks and the Good Shepherd Ministry has developed and extended to supporting families known to our churches (not necessarily Christian, certainly not just within the denominations) or local schools. Advice about the technology to live-stream services has been shared. St Michael's has been an active partner in the Penn Covenant, in the charitable work the Churches Together make so effective, in the life of Penn. St Michael's ecumenical life outside Penn (the parish is extensive) has not been so sustained, leading or focussed – perhaps because the personal links, the sense of community, are stronger in Penn. Through my experience as one of St Michael's representatives on the Penn Ecumenical Council, as a non-Wulfrunian, I came to appreciate the sense of place in Penn: the Village, Upper Penn and Lower Penn, because this impacted on plans and activities eg where to hold those Festivals; what images to put on our "Millenium" commemorative plate (St Bart's Anglo-Saxon cross stump for the manor of Upper Penn?); what route to take in local prayer walks. St Michael's is relatively young if one thinks in millennia, but where it stands has been part of Penn for centuries, and for decades St Michael's has been one of the four ventricles in the heart of the Churches in Penn. The above concerns the common life of Penn. When I moved from the North East to Penn I found that the routines of life were focussed locally: on Springhill, Penn Road for shopping. Coalway Road was primarily simply my route out of Penn: I used the services (libraries, toyshops, greengrocers, cafes) south of the road which was the main bus route I took directly to the centre of Wolverhampton and beyond. Coalway Road, with its speeding traffic and heavy use, is a psychological as well as physical divide in many respects; not just my own habits make me think this: Penn has its identity. I submit that the

proposed ward boundary change does not fully take into account the sense of community in Penn as evidenced above, and could work against renewal post pandemic. I submit in addition that the principle of the use of clear boundaries appears to have been ignored in determining this ward – unlike others which have retained their integrity eg the Tettenhall wards. * Mary Catherine Arthurs. WV4 4TD One wonders why the ancient practice of using the centre of a major physical feature (road or river) as an easily seen community boundary has been ignored in this case** to little clear advantage in the population of neighbouring wards - or to make significant differences across time in the numbers of constituents. **The former All Saints church at Ettingshall is in a street treated similarly in these proposals which fail to balance wards - (see those over 10,000 in the north of the city yet with 3 councillors just like others with 1000 people fewer) – but that is not currently a church serving a congregation in its vicinity, unlike St Michael's, Penn. To support my statement I attach the last Newsletter from before the Pandemic restricted church openings, gatherings etc. This went to the members of every Penn church and was shared beyond them, including via websites. Some events transferred to "Zoom", like the local celebration of Women's World Day of Prayer.

Uploaded Documents:

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