

Worcester

Personal Details:

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Comment text:

Thank you for the further consultation on new electoral arrangement for Worcester City Council. This is the response from Worcester City Council Cathedral Ward Councillors

Introduction

Following the draft recommendations from LGBC of November 2022, Cathedral Ward Councillors participated in discussion with colleagues within Worcester Labour Party and also with officers and then colleagues of Worcester City Council. We did not respond personally to that consultation as we were largely content with the proposals of LGBC and the responses that we had helped to formulate.

We were therefore disappointed that the LGBC report of May 2023, raised some completely new options from a handful of residents. It was very much hoped that all stakeholders would have a final report by now. The relationship between elected members and the communities that they represent is the bedrock of our democracy. We take this extremely seriously and had hoped to be starting to develop a knowledge of new areas and their issues, or be working with potential candidates to introduce them to our communities.

Once a final report is presumably received in the Autumn of 2023, there is little time left to build trusted, responsive relationships with local residents before polling day in May 2024. There is also a significant administrative workload involved in changing boundaries which we are unable to commence yet. Every political party and candidate, and Worcester City Council Electoral Services, will have a lot to do, to align their work to the new ward pattern of the Council.

Specific feedback re Battenhall, Cathedral, Fort Royal and Nunnery

Proposal that City Centre Ward is named Cathedral Ward

We support the proposal from many residents for the retention of the Cathedral Ward name. The city centre is geographically part of the ward and is more residential than many people realise. However, it is distinct from the Britannia Square community, and 'new Diglis' area, for example. The Cathedral remains physically at the heart of the city, visible looking over Worcester from all directions. It is also the location for major local and national civic events, as well as cultural and ethical ones. The Cathedral welcomes people of all faiths and cultures and will be within walking distance for all able residents within the new ward boundary.

Proposal to move Bolston Road and Woolhope Road in to Battenhall Ward

We strongly disagree with this proposal. We believe that this suggestion has been influenced by a current live issue in 2023 concerning a residents' parking scheme. This is a controversial measure, which crosses Worcestershire County Council Divisional boundaries. Which addresses are included, and excluded, from the proposed parking scheme is exercising residents. The County Council consultation on residents' parking has been taking place in the same time frame as the LGBC consultation.

We do not believe this short-term issue should affect the decision regarding Worcester City Council ward boundaries which will stand for the next 10 years at least. As indicated above, all these residents are within easy walking distance of the Cathedral.

Cranbourne Grove and Lilburne Close to be part of Nunnery Ward

We disagree and believe that this area should be part of Fort Royal Ward, as originally proposed in the LGBC November 2022 draft recommendations. This is the oldest part of a large residential development on the former Crown Packaging Works. Householders have lived here for several years now. During much of that time, the other side of this development has been a building site, and continues to be. There is thus no sense of community between settled residents and newly occupied and unfinished properties.

There is no road link or vehicle access between Cranbourne Grove and Lilburne Close and the rest of this new development. Cranbourne & Lilburne residents are thus part of the Perryfields and Wylds Lane community. The highway exit from their homes is onto Wylds Lane, and thus to the London Road main route, through Fort Royal Ward.

Main roads segment communities within Worcester city. Residents on the newer part of the Crown Packaging development, exit their homes via Williamson Road, onto Newtown Road main road. They rightly belong within Nunnery Ward and have limited contact with their 'neighbours' who face in the opposite direction.

Move Wych Elm Close into Nunnery Ward

On reflection, we disagree with this proposal. Whilst Wych Elm Close sits at the outer edge of Fort Royal Ward, we believe there is no reason to remove it from its present Councillor relationships. Vehicle access is onto London Road. There is no close pedestrian route to Nunnery Ward, which actually sits on a steep hill above these properties. Heading towards the city centre, the neighbouring properties are in Fort Royal Ward.

Going in the opposite direction, up London Road, it is some distance to any other residential properties in Nunnery Ward. The nearest buildings are in fact a large Waitrose supermarket, offices and a care centre. Thus, there is no community connection between Wych Elm Close and Nunnery Ward.

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Attached Documents:

None attached