

Ward Boundaries Consultation Response from Moor Green West Residents' Association

Is change really needed?

Will ward boundary change not distract Birmingham City Council from the real task of drawing our city together and tackling some of the big challenges we face with strengthening social cohesion, offering high quality education, keeping children safe and ensuring our wonderful city is economically vibrant into the future? If change is essential then let us do this in a careful and considered manner that reflects the needs of the people of Birmingham. If change is not essential then let us leave our boundaries like they are and get on with the real work.

Effective and convenient local government will be damaged by these proposals.

Representing people is not a numbers game. It is hard not to think that the LGBC has taken its proposed ward boundaries from the map of the local polling districts, such is the closeness of the match. We understand that councillors, like all of us, need a manageable workload. However, the benefits of working together in larger groups of councillors have not been taken into account. We are currently part of Moseley and Kings Heath ward with 3 councillors. This ensures that at least one is always available; for example cover is maintained if one councilor is ill or on holiday. It allows for wider representation within the council. Our current councillors have different interests and areas of expertise; this means we benefit from wider knowledge and representation. It will not be efficient or effective to have so many small wards all raising the same concerns to be dealt with by their individual councillor.

Fragmenting the people of Moseley across so many wards will make it much more difficult to consult with us and engage us in local democracy. Lobbying, campaigning and fighting for grants will be so much more of a challenge for our Moseley. The integrity of our local groups such as Moseley in Bloom, Moseley Forum and the many others will be compromised.

The proposal to have elections for all councillors every 4 years will mean that all work across a ward stops around election time as all councillors will be focusing on their election campaign. Should there be significant changes in councillors then much knowledge about local issues and current activities will be lost, all in one go. Having a phased election system is much more effective for continuity of business. Notwithstanding, politicians will come and go. Local people need structures that keep us together and make it easy for us to work together; we need to remain as Moseley, whichever part of it we live or work in.

Much time and 5 years of effort were put into developing the Moseley Supplementary Planning document (SPD). The Moseley Regeneration group is now guided by this document. We also have our own local regeneration strategy 'Making Moseley.' Any ward called Moseley must

have the centre of Moseley within it and take account of the boundaries for the SPD so that we can respond to future developments coming down the track, such as HS2 connectivity.

It is hard to see how the LGBC has considered community Identity in its proposals.

In 1878 Joseph Chamberlain did not build his beautiful home, Highbury Hall in Balsall Heath or Cannon Hill. He built it in Moseley. In 1405 the Pope instructed the Bishop of Worcester to allow the local parishioners to have mass in the chapel of St Mary Moseley; Our parish Church is not in Balsall Heath or Cannon Hill. It is in Moseley, an historical village community.

The proposal has not recognized in any way the importance of the name Moseley to those who live here, nor the social, economic and political (with a very small p and a big P) ties that bind us as the people of Moseley. If implemented it will tear apart well-established community links, reducing our sense of belonging and social cohesion that are such a focus for the Government and society currently.

As budgets tighten we become more reliant on the work of voluntary organisations. Splitting Moseley amongst several wards will make for more complex and fragmented bidding and grant allocation. The business area of Moseley according to the proposals will be in a different ward making fundraising much more challenging.

We are concerned that the proposal divides our active Moor Green West Residents' Association area between Balsall Heath & Cannon Hill and Stirchley. This would have us working with 3 different wards and 4 councillors. All of Moor Green Lane and Elizabeth Road identify with Moseley. We shop there, we catch our buses there, we attend meetings, we take part in a wide range of local events in Moseley Village, we support the Farmers' market, Mosley in Bloom, and the various local community groups such as Mosley Forum and The Mosley Society. We do very few of these things in Stirchley.

Like everyone who lives in Moseley we are proud of Moseley Village and the wider residential area and the local amenities. We actively take part in sustaining and developing our neighbourhood. For example we clear litter along our roads and in both Highbury park and Holders Lane woods and fields. We have monthly conservation working parties maintaining Holders Lane woods that support the council and the park rangers in the challenging task of working within reducing budgets.

The residents of Elizabeth Road and the western end of Moor Green Lane are part of Moseley and wish this to be represented in the ward we belong to and the name of that ward. We want the LGBC to reconsider its proposal and recommend a Moseley ward that reflects the submission from the Moseley Community Groups.

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