

Appendix 15



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THE MOSELEY SOCIETY

Caring for an historic area of Birmingham

Charity no. 512211

The Review Officer (Birmingham)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
14th Floor Millbank Tower
Millbank
London, SW1P 4QP

6 February 2016

Dear Review Officer,

I am writing on behalf of the Moseley Society to

- Object to the Commission's draft proposals for ward boundaries that would divide our community between 5 wards
- Support the combined community proposal submitted by David Isgrove on behalf of the whole community for a two-councillor Moseley Ward. We have been involved in every word, comma and map point of that submission.

The Moseley Society is a very active civic amenity society, founded in 1979. That was too late for involvement in the 1976 enquiry into ward boundaries that resulted in the division of our community and our shopping centre between Moseley and Sparkhill Wards, later also becoming a constituency boundary. We know how many difficulties that made for those of us trying to secure improvements or even equal service delivery across the divide. For example wind-blown litter is not collected when street cleansing is operated by two different depots on either side of a line on a map and the shopping centre is therefore permanently litter-strewn.

The Moseley Society is a membership organisation. We collect around 400 subscriptions and represent around 1,000 members. Since 15 December 2015 when the Commission's draft proposals were published those members have been actively involved in helping to distribute leaflets and advertise the public meeting. I cannot recall such an eager response – on one day alone I counted 50 emails from members wanting to help.

Moseley as an active, connected, identified community:

The Moseley History group is part of our Society and so we can tell you with confidence that

- Moseley is listed in the Domesday Book

- The first owners of Moseley Hall and its estate were the Grevis family from Kings Norton, Moseley being part of the parish of Kings Norton
- In 1405 Pope Innocent VI sent a licence to the Bishop of Worcestershire for a Chapel of Ease to be allowed at St Mary's, Moseley
- During the rapid expansion of Victorian and Edwardian Moseley many local groups and societies were developed – the Moseley & Balsall Heath Institute; many sports clubs; an earlier Moseley Society; The Moseley & Kings Heath Journal. We know a great deal about the flourishing of sporting, artistic, dramatic, literary and musical Moseley life at that time.
- Moseley has always been a place where people moving to Birmingham wanted to settle and identify with. It welcomed many refugees who managed to escape from Nazi Germany. Throughout the later part of the 20th century Moseley has continued to attract people moving into Birmingham or wanting to relocate within the city. Some of the reasons we have identified are the good reputation of local schools, (including the only Jewish primary school in the city which these days attracts more Muslim than Jewish children whose families are drawn together by shared values); attractive, large houses into which musical instruments fit easily; proximity to places of employment such as Birmingham University and hospitals; and above all the community-spiritedness of the local population.
- When people deliberately seek out an area they are also keen to join in with community life – through places of worship, schools, The Society, sports clubs and more recently through Moseley Forum, Moseley Community Development Trust which runs Moseley Exchange, Moseley in Bloom, the Farmers' Market and many other local groups. The rooms available in church halls and other places of worship and at Moseley Exchange are booked every night by local groups. The most recent arrival has been U3A – the University of the 3rd Age. It was set up as a Moseley & Kings Heath branch and the inaugural meeting attracted so many potential members that the doors had to be closed and a waiting list formed until the first 200 memberships had been processed.

Our experience of how convenient and effective local government can be achieved:

We have experience since 1979 of working with councillors and city officers to try to improve Moseley, and in particular the built environment which is the remit of our civic amenity society. We have seen councillors of all the main parties come and go. We have seen enormous changes in the way city officers working for planning, transportation, waste management, regulatory services including licensing and environmental health, have been organised and reorganised. We have experience of what works.

Councillors:

- Your proposals will divide what the community thinks of as Moseley between five Wards, which will be represented by six councillors. Only one of these, the councillor for Moseley Ward, will have most of their attention on what we think of as part of Moseley, although even that person will have part of Balsall Heath, including Balsall Heath Park and the top end of Ladypool Road, to care for. All the other councillors will have their main focus on other areas – Balsall Heath, Stirchley, Kings Heath, Sparkhill South. In our experience larger wards work better, are much more efficient to administer, provide citizens with a choice of Councillors to approach. We think it important that there is a choice of gender available.

In a single councillor ward what will happen if the councillor is ill, becomes Lord Mayor, is a cabinet member with many other responsibilities? Neighbouring single councillor wards represented by different political parties are less likely to cooperate for the common good than to score political points.

Community, councillor, officer co-operation:

- Despite the problems in dealing with the Moseley/Sparkbrook boundary which gave us six Councillors, two ward sub-committees, two MPs, two waste collection depots, two planning control areas, we have managed to develop some successful initiatives. Because the city council has never owned any public buildings in Moseley (apart from some toilets long since demolished) and therefore has never based any staff here, and because we are a relatively less-deprived and needy area than some of our neighbours, we have got used to taking the initiative.
- In 1991 there was a crisis in the shopping area caused by the closure of the main supermarket. A 'Moseley Action Plan' led to a 'Moseley Implementation Group' chaired by a particularly gifted Planning Officer. The group was an effective combination of city officers and local residents. This produced a 'Non-retail uses' Supplementary Planning Document, and also led on to the formation of Moseley Forum after the City Council had agreed that Forum areas could reflect real communities and cross existing ward boundaries. The Forum and the Society subsequently worked together to help establish the Moseley Community Development Trust (MCDT).
- In 2004, when most of Moseley was included in the current Moseley & Kings Heath Ward, forming groups, in the way pioneered by the 'Moseley Implementation Group', became easier. The Moseley Regen Group grew out of a concern by councillors about empty properties in the area. That group is now run by a volunteer from MCDT but it represents all of Moseley - an area large enough to ensure officers find it worthwhile to work with. That group produced the Moseley Supplementary Planning Document 2014, the first such community-led document in the city and upon which the proposal for a two-councillor Moseley ward boundary has been based.
- The Moseley & Kings Heath Ward Greener, Cleaner, Safer Environment Group is another example of a successful group which, run by a volunteer from The Moseley Society, is chaired by a councillor and attended by relevant officers. Started in 2001 in preparation for the boundary changes that took place in 2004, it has pioneered a number of initiatives that were taken up and replicated city-wide including graffiti removal; kerbside collections of recyclable materials; kerbside junk-swaps.

We know we **reflect the community interests and identity** of Moseley; we have long experience in **providing for convenient and effective local government**. The proposal set out in the documents submitted by David Isgrove on behalf of us all also provide for **equality of representation**.

All the criteria are therefore met in the community proposal which had received widespread support. In the Commission's proposal only the equality of representation criterion is met while the other two considerations are failed.

Yours faithfully

Fiona Adams MBE
Secretary, The Moseley Society