

**RESPONSE TO THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION PROPOSED CHANGES
TO THE WARDS OF BIRMINGHAM
BY THE COMBINED COMMUNITY GROUPS OF MOSELEY February 2016**

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BACKGROUND:

This document is a response to the changes proposed to the wards of Birmingham by The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) with particular reference to Moseley and the surrounding area.

It has been compiled by a working group drawn from **eight community and business groups** currently working with Moseley communities (Moseley Forum; Moseley Society; Moseley Community Development Trust; Greener, Cleaner, Safer Environment group; Moseley Churches; Moseley Regeneration Group; Moseley B13 magazine editorial group; Moseley Farmers Market; local Moseley Businesses).

Preparation for this response has included a **public meeting of five hundred residents** (video evidence of this support can be found at *Appendix 4*) and this response is largely **coterminous with the Supplementary Planning Document** adopted by Birmingham City Council in 2014 it also ensures that the **official Conservation Areas of Moseley and St Agnes remain intact** inside the Ward and therefore retain their historical protection¹. See *Appendix 3 for the SDP map*

Every household within our proposed area was leafleted by volunteers and email bases of over 1000 and 3536 on twitter were informed as well extensive use of Facebook reaching over 1000 Moseley residents. Our combined email & social media databases ensured a further reach of several thousand.

The methodology behind the electoral numbers referred to in this response can be found within *Appendix 2*.

The Map illustrating our proposed Ward can be found at *Appendix 1*

SUMMARY:

The Combined Community Groups of Moseley wholeheartedly reject the proposed boundary changes to the Moseley and Kings Heath Ward as detailed in the draft LGBCE recommendations of December 2015 and find that they fail to meet two of the three criteria they aim to fulfil, namely that they do not reflect community identity and they do not provide for effective and convenient local government.

We find the LGBCE proposals counter-intuitive and totally unacceptable. This document details our proposal for a two Councillor ward called Moseley, that geographically aligns with our statutory planning areas, that ensures electoral equality, that accurately reflects the strength of our community identity and that provides for considerably more effective and convenient local government than the LGBCE proposals.

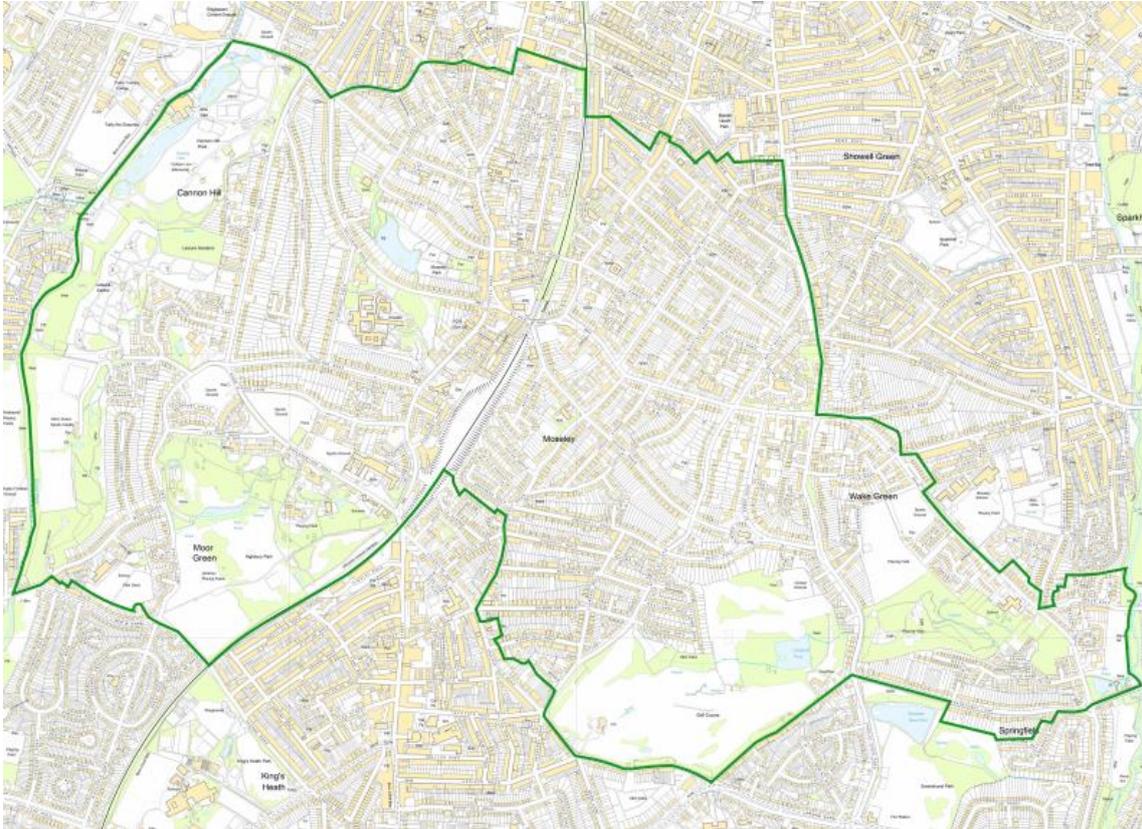
We are aware that you will receive a significant number of individual responses supporting our proposal.

Although the political party submissions now all agree on a two councillor ward for Moseley, we note that none of the political party submissions agree completely with each other with the ward boundary we have drawn in response to on-the-ground feeling. We therefore urge the LGBCE to recognise the value of a community response and the

¹ link to SPD <http://www.moseleycdt.com/bigplan> , link to Conservation Areas: St Agnes <http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/stagnesca> , Moseley <http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/moseleyca>

comprehensive consultation carried out for the benefit of local people over and above the political submissions designed primarily to support specific political advantages. Indeed, we were encouraged to hear Professor Colin Mellors stress the importance of such community responses on the BBC Sunday Politics Show on the 17th January this year.

MAP OF OUR PROPOSED TWO COUNCILLOR WARD, MOSELEY



Our Moseley Ward incorporates the polling districts CSA, CSB, CSH, CSI, and DEH in their entirety and incorporates part of the polling districts CSC, CSG, CSJ, CSK, DEF, DEI, DEG and DDD where the polling districts cut across areas that are considered by local people and groups alike to be definitively part of Moseley. In addition, our Moseley Ward no longer incorporates polling districts CSD, CSE and CSF.

Our Moseley Ward would have an electorate of 16,357 in 2021 and two Councillors each of whom would represent approximately 8,178 voters. *See Appendix 2 for details*

Before finalising the boundary of our proposed Moseley Ward, members of the working group met with community and political representatives from the wards that share our boundary – to ensure as far as possible that our electoral total would not compromise other ward proposals from neighbouring communities. *See Appendices 5 and 6*

In addition, we have met with and sought cohesion on our ward boundaries with representatives of neighbouring wards of Balsall Heath, Kings Heath, Hall Green & Stirchley to ensure our boundaries reflect their own community interests and identities as far as possible. The only known conflict areas are Highbury Park (not including the Hall) & Sarehole Mill which have joint community interests and no residents.

PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE LGBCE PROPOSALS:

- **Equality of representation:**

The LGBCE proposals so closely follow the polling district boundaries that we believe this is the only criterion that has been considered. The LGBCE proposals are unnecessarily constrained by polling district boundaries.

Polling districts are not well suited for use as building blocks when drawing up ward boundary proposals. Their boundaries are arbitrary and idiosyncratic, many with highly irregular shapes including outliers and 'tentacle' extensions

Polling districts vary enormously in the size of their electorates (by up to 600% just in the current Moseley and Kings Heath ward). Some of the larger ones with electorates of several thousand cover 2 or more distinct communities. The larger ones are especially problematic because combining adjacent polling districts one by one (without dividing them) to build up a new ward proposal can tip the combined electorate from well below the required figure for a 1-, 2- or 3-councillor ward to far in excess of that figure. Birmingham has some of the largest polling districts in the country, some of which are larger than whole wards in other cities.

Thus any proposals based solely on polling districts will cause dysfunctional government and cannot reflect the community.

- **Reflecting of community interests and identities & Providing for convenient and effective local government:**

Moseley, as understood by its residents, has a phenomenal track record of community action and achievement. Moseley in Bloom has won eight regional gold awards; Moseley Folk Festival (staffed by volunteers) has been running for sixteen years and has recently joined with Mostly Jazz Festival both now attracting tourism and revenue to the area from as far afield as the USA. In the last three years, approximately £25,000 has been raised by volunteers, local businesses and the local community to provide Christmas lights for the centre of the area we consider to be Moseley; upwards of £1,500 has been raised through the actions of the Moseley Alternative Giving Campaign to support rough sleepers who find themselves in Moseley; Moseley's Farmer's Market (managed by volunteers) has twice won 'best Farmers Market in the UK and has donated over £50,000 back into the community of Moseley. Moseley B13 magazine (established in 1974) reflects these achievements and has been uniting the community ever since, ensuring the community is kept informed about all Moseley developments (*see Appendix 18 for example*).²

These achievements and many like them are possible because the fiercely enthusiastic community of Moseley is able to work with Councillors who are dedicated to their area, and engage with Council departments (such as Planning or Waste management) who only need to approve action in one Ward.

Amongst the LGBCE proposals we have found objectionable and of grave concern to the local community are:

- **Moseley Village Green (centre) would no longer be in Moseley**
- **Moseley Farmers Market would no longer be in Moseley**
- **Moseley Park and Pool would no longer be in Moseley**
- **Moseley Bog would no longer be in Moseley**
- **St Mary's, the parish church of Moseley, would no longer be in Moseley**
- **St Agnes Conservation Area would be split between two wards**

² See Appendices 8 to 10 for maps showing the catchment areas for B13 and the Farmers Market

- **Balsall Heath park WOULD be in Moseley!** (despite it being a recognised facility used by Balsall Heath residents and included in their neighbourhood plan)

Changes to the ward boundary are not going to stop the Moseley community working together to provide these events and initiatives. But instead of Councillors and Council officers who at present only need to think about the issues affecting one ward, each of the achievements listed above would need the support of up to six different Councillors (all with different interests and priorities) and would require council officer support across five different wards. It would therefore be very **inconvenient** to get effective local government support for any of these established and successful community activities.

We feel these co-ordination problems would be replicated across every kind of local government activity for the people who consider themselves to live in ‘Moseley’ and we fear that convenient and effective local government will be non-existent in this area if the LGBCE proposals go ahead.

Local press articles covering local feeling:

<http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/moseley-village-not-moseley-under-10603940>

<http://www.birminghampost.co.uk/news/regional-affairs/new-birmingham-ward-boundaries-could-10605461>

OUR PROPOSAL FOR A TWO COUNCILLOR MOSELEY WARD:

- **Equality of representation** (*see appendix 2*):

Total estimated electorate for our proposed Moseley ward	16,357
Variance from City Average for a 2-councillor ward	1.6% ³

Our Moseley Ward would have an electorate of 16,357 in 2021 and two Councillors each of whom would represent approximately 8,178 voters.⁴ These figures are within a 2% variance of the LGBCE recommended amount.

- **Reflecting community interests and identities:**

In March 2015, The Sunday Times announced that of all the urban places there were to live in Britain, Moseley was the best, citing its culture, its community and its independence as some of the many reasons people should choose to live here. Many were surprised that the best place in Britain was in Birmingham, the people who live in Moseley were not.

(http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/style/homes_and_gardens/best_places/article1527439.ece)

³ A full explanation of these figures can be found at Appendix 2

⁴ Sources for figures drawn from:

LGBCE website for whole PD electorate figures (2015 and 2021) and PD boundaries
 Electoral Register
 Ordnance Survey Mapping
 Google Maps and Satellite Imagery
 Royal Mail Postcode & Address Finder
 Ground Survey
 Population Census 2011

In 2014, after five years work by local people, Birmingham City Council officially adopted the Moseley Supplementary Planning Document, (Moseley SPD) the first such community-led plan in Birmingham and described at the time by a cabinet member as “a vision for Moseley that will provide robust guidance for the future”. The Moseley SPD had been produced by the community groups of Moseley including The Moseley Forum (active since 1998) and The Moseley Society (active since 1979) and was co-ordinated by The Moseley Community Development Trust (active since 2000). All of these groups and the SPD itself understand Moseley to be the area covered by our map. *See Appendices 7 to 11. We have not included the players involved in the Moseley Ashfield Cricket Club, Moseley Rugby Club nor the over 500 volunteers across Moseley who offer their time through the Moseley Community Development Trust who all could have been mapped.*

<http://www.moseleycdt.com/bigplan>

The Moseley SPD area forms the basis of our proposed Moseley Ward with two additions. In the north part of Birchwood Crescent, Anderton Park Road, Cadbury Road and Yardley Wood Road have been added at the request of residents who have been associate members of Moseley Forum and petitioned to be part of the community-proposed Moseley Ward. In the east the properties around Moseley Bog have been included. This area was part of Moseley Ward until 2004 and was initially included in the SPD but the properties were removed to keep the area within the current Moseley & Kings Heath Ward boundary. We feel this is the ideal opportunity to re-unite this part of the Moseley map.

In short the map of our proposed two councillor ward of Moseley is a visual representation of what the residents and community groups of Moseley consider to be Moseley.

- **Providing for convenient and effective local government:**

All events, initiatives and activities that are part of the daily life of Moseley residents will be much easier to organise, fund, regulate and support if they take place across one ward, supported by Councillors whose only concern is the ward of Moseley. Residents and groups will have clear and convenient lines of communication. Council departments such as Waste Management, Planning and Parks and Leisure will be able to engage with the whole area via one ward.

- **Convenient and effective local government can only be ensured if the area considered by the community as Moseley is represented by a two Councillor ward called Moseley.**

We feel our proposed two councillor ward of Moseley meets all the criteria set out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and we look forward to hearing your thoughts about our proposal. *Appendices 12 to 17* show a sample of the many responses you will have received. These and many others have confirmed and reinforced the need for our proposal.

Should you have any questions or require any further information about our proposal please contact:

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