

Bath and North East Somerset

Personal Details:

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Comment text:

Your report on draft recommendations for the City of Bath covers changes to the boundary between the Widcombe and Lyncombe wards with the comments "Our Widcombe ward combines the lower parts of Widcombe Hill and Lyncombe Hill with the Bear Flat area" and "We received representations which argued that the whole of Greenway Lane should be included in a single ward. Noting the access to Greenway Lane, we propose to include it in a single-councillor Lyncombe ward. Our single-councillor Lyncombe and Widcombe wards would have 2% and 5% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the district by 2023, respectively, and we would be interested to hear views about combining these areas to form a two-member ward.". We regard these recommendations as being flawed, primarily as a result of your not being familiar with local circumstances. This area of Lyncombe and Widcombe lies within the setting of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the boundary runs about a hundred yards from our house), as well, of course, as within the World Heritage Site and the City of Bath Conservation Area. And the largely undeveloped Lyncombe valley is probably the most notable of the deep-cut havens of semi-rural tranquillity situated within the urban fabric which are a peculiar characteristic of Bath, and displays many of the rural aspects of the Enclosed Limestone Valley landscape described in the Cotswolds Board's Landscape Strategy and Guidelines as typical of the southern Cotswolds. The local secondary school was established in 1932 by the City of Bath, whose architect artfully crafted its buildings into the hillside with remarkable unobtrusiveness. However, in response to a 1989 plan to replace it with a sixth-form college the school seized independence from the local authority through a bid for grant-maintained status. It has since pursued an ambitious expansion. Now an academy, it has increased its pupil numbers hugely, and achieved formidably good academic results. It is rightly proud of its progress, and describes itself with the term "independent character" in advertisements blazoned on buses frequenting the city. It has clearly outgrown its site, and is managed in a focused way which leaves the local community and the sensitive local environment somewhere near the very bottom of its list of priorities. Evidently there is more than one view that can be taken of such a school's behaviour. But it is clear that effective and responsive councillors can play an important part in mediating conflicts of this sort. When a difficult site such as this school is right on a ward boundary, it is harder to interest a local councillor in the problems it causes; and harder for him to intervene without persuading a councillor from

the next ward to join him. At present, with the school and the east of Greenway Lane in Widcombe, and Poets' Corner (as it is known) with Devonshire Buildings and the east of Greenway Lane in Lyncombe, precisely these issues arise. We had hopes when the boundary review was begun that the current arrangements would be adjusted so as to move the school and its neighbours all into the same ward, perhaps by running the ward boundary along Wellsway. We find, however, that although change is proposed, it would still leave the ward boundary running through the problem area. We would ask either that the ward boundary is moved to Wellsway (so that all Greenway Lane and Devonshire Buildings as well as Poets' Corner fall into Widcombe), or that the two wards are amalgamated as a single two-member ward. Many of our neighbours are also anxious at the proposal to move to one-member wards, on the grounds that a two-member ward offers welcome flexibility if a councillor should fall ill, or take leave of absence, or take a dislike to a resident whether for political or some other reason. We have sympathy with these arguments, and they add in our view to the case for amalgamating Widcombe and Lyncombe wards.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded