

**Owen, David**

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**From:** June Player (Cllr)  
**Sent:** 18 February 2018 19:02  
**To:** reviews  
**Subject:** FW: Bath & North East Somerset Council New Ward Boundary Proposals submission

Dear David Owen

**Re: Electoral Review of Bath and North East Somerset**

**My submission is with regard to the proposed NEW 3-COUNCILLOR WARD OF OLDFIELD PARK, BATH**

My initial reaction on seeing this proposal was:-

- 1). how big the area is
- 2). how on earth would a councillor be able to walk round it - which I can and do in my current ward
- 3). how would a councillor be able to give a decent service to all the residents and see what is going on in the ward in general
- 4). why has it been decided that my established Ward of Westmoreland should be swallowed up into this much larger new ward of Oldfield Park to be the ONLY 3-councillor ward throughout BANES with 2 very different sections to it (Commercial and dense residential) when it could be divided in to 2 wards and still be in line with the 3 Aims that have to be taken in to consideration in this electoral review?

To give all prospective councillors an equal chance, I believe you have to start from the assumption that a ward is able to be overseen by an individual councillor. This would then not discourage any individual from standing and so get involved in local democracy. However, due to the size and number of voters a councillor would have to cover and represent in this proposal it would discourage people who are not in a main party and having the benefits this would bring. One cannot assume that 3 same-party/group prospective councillors will be elected and so allow them to divide up the area and work accordingly to give them a sensible work load and area to cover and provide the voters with proper representation.

Although single councillor wards achieve the best representation for the electors and coverage of their ward, from my experience I know that a 2-councillor ward can also be workable even if they have single-standing councillors, provided a councillor is prepared to put in the time and commitment. A 3-councillor ward would be an impossibility and the electorate especially would be the ones to suffer the most which is not what we want.

My comments are based on a city ward and not a rural ward where areas are understandably far greater and some form of transport would have to be used.

This new ward is now being proposed to go from Weston Lock, on the Lower Bristol Rd in the west, and all the way over to just before Churchill Bridge in Bath's City Centre, in the east. This is a very large area with two very different sides to it. Looking at a map of this new proposed ward you can see how the western side, going over to Brougham Hayes, consists of predominantly tightly packed residential streets. What one cannot see though (unless one walks or drives along the Lower Bristol Rd) is that now, most of the strip of land in-between the Lower Bristol Rd to the River from Weston Lock up to Victoria Bridge Rd, which all used to be industrial, has been, or is being, developed into dense residential areas. There is the short stretch of useful retail outlets from and including Weston Lock that serve this side of Bath very well but then it changes to become all residential. There are two large residential student accommodation buildings, the under-construction site of Roseberry Place up to Windsor Bridge Rd which is to be nearly all residential, and after that there is the huge Western Riverside Housing Development (still to be completed). Added to this on the other side of Lower Bristol Road, work has started to demolish the old Pitman Press to develop that into another densely residential complex.

In contrast, to the east of Brougham Hayes over ½ of it is much more open and spacious and predominately commercial (shops, offices, garage workshops, Bed and Breakfasts plus, a School standing in its own grounds). There is a small area of residential properties from the railway line to the Linear Park on the eastern side from St Kilda's Rd but the density of these streets very visibly starts to lessen quite quickly, as the properties become larger ones with front and back gardens to then the much larger ones with driveways. A good number of these have, over time, been converted in to small offices and businesses.

In order to keep in line with the number of electors now proposed for each councillor, I was unable to include this area within my new proposed boundary however, due to the very obvious sections in this eastern side, one councillor would be able to cover this proposed ward and be able to divide their duties and so represent all accordingly.

In view of the above, I feel a fairer and more equal proposal for all, would be to divide this large and diverse proposed new ward area in two and so have a two and a one-councillor Ward, a mix which is in keeping with the proposed pattern of all the other new proposed wards of Bath and North East Somerset.

## **NEW BOUNDARY**

My suggested new Boundary would run along from Victoria Bridge at the River, on Victoria Bridge Road to include Western Terrace, Albert Crescent and The Mews to the east of it because presently they can only be accessed along Victoria Bridge Road. Doing this would keep all of the Western Riverside together. My boundary would then go over the Lower Bristol Road, all the way up Brougham Hayes, over the bridge and right into Livingstone Road and then immediate left into Arlington Road. Here it would then go down to Shaftesbury Road, in to St Kilda's Rd and up to the Linear Park. The Boundary is to run behind the row of houses of Arlington Road so those properties would not be included in this new ward. If it were not for the

kink at Arlington and Shaftesbury Roads, to negotiate round the Co-operative Store, this Boundary would be a straight line and so be very definable. This should have the numbers of electors required for a 2-councillor ward on the west and a one-councillor ward on the east.

## **WARD NAMES**

The introduction of this Boundary would create a 2-councillor ward to the west of it which could retain its existing and established name of WESTMORELAND and a one-councillor ward to the east of it which could be named OLDFIELD PARK. The introduction of this new boundary would mean no adjustments would have to be made on any of the surrounding wards plus, it would result in having 2 manageable-sized wards.

## **COMMUNITY IDENTITY**

My proposed Westmoreland Ward is mainly a densely residential area including a lot of student Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) with similar issues to have to deal with. The Shopping District of Moorland Rd would be kept intact which ties in nicely and would strengthen the community identity of it as it would be very accessible for all residents including those living on the farther western side of it. This community identity, combined with the retail outlets mentioned above from Weston Lock to the Student Accommodation Buildings would be enhanced even more due to residents using these shops regularly and so staying in their locality and not having to always travel in to Bath's City Centre. A lot of the shoppers would recognise and acknowledge each other so there would be a far less feeling of anonymity and isolation.

The introduction of the various Community Groups that I have set up over the last 7 years, since being the Westmoreland Ward councillor, have considerably raised the community identity and involvement. They are:-

Westmoreland Residents' Action Group

Westmoreland Speed Watch

Westmoreland Litter Pickers – monthly litter picks throughout the ward with volunteers aged 4 to 80 years – Arrangements are finishing for one to cover all the current ward of Westmoreland in March as part of the National Keep Britain Tidy Campaign which will include school children, students, locals and shop workers

Westmoreland Snowpatrollers – residents go out to salt roads and pavements to make them safe for pedestrians and drivers.

All these groups have led to promoting a good sense of community spirit, having pride in our community and giving a sense of belonging.

There is also the On-Board Community Project which was founded 11 years ago this March by myself and 2 other residents. We adopted our local uncared-for station and residents are involved in it by maintaining it, keeping it clean and tidy as well as doing a lot of gardening to make it an attractive and safe area.

The existing Westmoreland Ward is a thriving community which has also been achieved because it has long-term residents who have a vested interest in their community and, due to the increased positive input from the 2 Universities, has also increased the input from the short-term student residents who contribute greatly amongst other things to our community litter picks and the gardening projects.

Each of my proposed wards have good local and national Bus Services going along the Lower Bristol Rd as well as up through both of them.

Both these proposed wards would now be walkable which as a councillor I think is very important for wards so near to a city centre to be. It means a councillor is able to easily go and visit residents about concerns they have raised as well as keeping an eye on what else is going on in the area and pick up on matters in general such as broken lights, littered areas, blocked drains etc. It also makes a councillor visible to the residents and more approachable and so build up a connection between each other which is so important. It also helps reduce feelings of loneliness which is becoming so much more prevalent these days as more people live on their own.

If the draft proposal comes in, then a councillor would not be able to build up a rapport with their residents or keep an eye on the area as it would be just too large and not at all manageable. To be forced to have to drive or try to get a bus to the nearest area a councillor would be wanting to visit a resident in would be very time-consuming and a very poor use of a councillor's time. Having to use a car would increase pollution levels and congestion problems which Bath suffers badly from already and which flies in the face of the Government plans in trying to reduce pollution and getting more people out of their vehicles. Also of course for Bath, there is virtually nowhere to park anyway and if there were – it would cost a fortune plus, with Bath being so hilly using a bicycle would be out of the question!

(Regarding Western Riverside - at present there are not enough electors to make this a Ward in its own right, but I can see that this will change and become one in the next Ward Boundary Changes.)

## **EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Every councillor who is elected is expected to represent every elector in their entire ward. In the case with the proposed new 3-councillor Oldfield Park Ward it must be noted that there are a large number of HMOs and many of the occupants of these are not on the electoral list. Whilst your numbers do not recognise these residents, a councillor would have to. They cannot just be ignored because they are not on the electoral role. Their numbers would add to a councillor's work load which is another reason why there is the need to

divide this new ward in to two manageable sizes. This new ward would be even more onerous for a councillor to truly represent all its residents.

Yours sincerely

Independent Councillor Westmoreland Ward Bath

*Keeping it Clean, Green & Friendly -  
Promoting Pride in our Community.*