Dear Jolyon Jackson,

**RE Electoral Review of Birmingham Council – Birmingham Selly Oak constituency**

I am writing in response to the publication of the Boundary Commission’s proposals on 15 December 2015. I understand the Commission proposes to reduce the number of City Councillors from 120 to 101 and redraw the current local government ward boundaries creating a mixture of 1 and 2 member wards. I am writing as the MP for Birmingham Selly Oak constituency with comments focusing on my constituency.

Under the proposals the current Billesley 3 member ward is to be split up into a 2 member ‘Billesley’ ward and a 1 member ‘Highters Heath’ ward. I think the proposals for these two wards are sound and respect community boundaries. I am pleased to see the inclusion of the ‘Vimey Triangle’ in the proposed Billesley ward, this small area was previously part of Billesley ward before the last boundary review and people living there do regard themselves as Billesley residents.

In respect to the current 3 member Brandwood ward, the proposed 1 member ‘Brandwood’ ward brings several communities together and does not appear to divide communities. The proposed 1 member ‘Monyhull’ ward does satisfactorily combine the communities of Druids Heath, the Monyhull Grange Estate, and area just off Monyhull Hall Road. However, I do not think naming the ward ‘Monyhull’ is appropriate. Firstly, the Druids Heath estate as we know it was approved in the mid-1960’s and built in phases and has been part of the landscape in South Birmingham for many many years now. The projected electorate for Druids Heath based on the Boundary Commissions predictions will be 4,313 by 2021, while the population of Monyhull Grange estate is predicted to reach 895 electors by 2021. Many of my constituents in this area would say they lived in Druids Heath and I am not aware that the area ‘Monyhull’, which is largely associated with the old hospital, is locally recognised or used. I believe that for recognisability and because the population of Druids Heath is larger than the population of the ‘Monyhull’ area, the Commission should consider changing the name of this proposed ward to ‘Druids Heath and Monyhull’.

Turning to the proposals to split the current 3 member Bournville ward into a 1 member ‘Stirchley’ ward and 2 member ‘Bournville & Cotteridge’. The proposal for a 1 member ‘Stirchley’ ward is interesting; while it does include Stirchley Village, which has historic ties to Bournville and the Cadbury family, it also includes the Pineapple Estate area, an area in Cotteridge and part of
Moseley. This ward is clearly more than just Stirchley and does bring in small parts of other communities. It may be more appropriate to call this proposed ward ‘Greater Stirchley’ to recognise that while Stirchley Village is part of the ward there are other communities included.

In regards to the proposed 2 member ‘Bournville & Cotteridge’ ward, I have a few concerns about the Commission’s electorate predictions and what has been defined as Bournville and Cotteridge. Firstly, the proposals put forward have included a central area in Selly Oak and the boundary runs along the train line and appears to include the Selly Oak train station in the ward proposals. This area is very distinct from Bournville and Cotteridge and the population is a mix of students and permanent residents. The Masefield Estate in the current Bournville ward is also part of the proposals for this ward. A part of the current Northfield ward has also been added on to the proposed ‘Bournville & Cotteridge’ ward presumably to make up the numbers. Obviously these areas are not part of either the recognised communities of Bournville or Cotteridge. There is already a problem in the area with people thinking the area of Bournville Village or Bournville Trust is the same as the whole of the ward which is called Bournville. Expanding the current ward into Selly Oak and Northfield would compound this problem and could threaten the identity of Bournville Village. Again I think the name of the ward does need revisiting, I suggest ‘Greater Bournville & Cotteridge’.

My main concern about this proposal is that the projected electorate does not seem to account for the development of the Selly Oak Hospital site which its proposed be included in a ‘Bournville & Cotteridge’ ward. The polling district CYG had an electorate of 1,726 in 2014 and the predicted electorate for 2021 is 1,942. This is only an increase of 216. The Selly Oak Hospital site is being redeveloped and 650 new houses will be built. This will add a minimum of 1000 more electors by 2021, and I would argue we are likely to see at least 2000 new electors here. This clearly has not been considered and I would like to see the plans reflect this and the numbers amended accordingly.

Lastly, I have looked at the proposals for the current Selly Oak ward and I am quite perplexed that the well-known community of Selly Oak does not figure in the plans. Selly Oak is a very clearly defined community and consists of both permanent residents and students from the University of Birmingham. If the current proposals go ahead we will have a Selly Oak parliamentary constituency, a Selly Oak train station, a Selly Oak Library and a Selly Oak Park but there will not be any recognition of Selly Oak in local government ward boundaries. I believe this needs serious consideration.

While the proposals for a 2 member ‘Bournbrook & Selly Park’ ward are positive in that the community of Selly Park is not split, the remainder of the community of Selly Oak is not included in this proposed ward and has been carved up between a proposed ‘Bournville & Cotteridge’ and ‘Weoley’ ward. There a lots of community groups, such as the Community Partnership for Selly Oak, which work across the proposed boundaries and I do not want to see their work hampered by ward boundaries which do not reflect the community and it’s needs.
I hope you will consider my comments when reviewing your proposals. It is vitally important that local ward boundaries reflect our communities and I want to see local issues and problems tackled sensibly and with a joined-up approach. Local government is responsible for delivering the majority of local services and is now responsible for delivering public health making it more important than ever to get these new boundaries right.

Yours sincerely

Steve McCabe MP
Member of Parliament for Birmingham Selly Oak