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Sent: 26 September 2016 00:01

To: reviews <reviews@lgbce.org.uk>

Subject: Submission from Northenden Neighbourhood Forum to Manchester Electoral Review

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Please find attached a submission to the Manchester Review from Northenden Neighbourhood Forum

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me

I would be grateful for acknowledgement of receipt when convenient

With thanks

Conor Jerram
Chair - NNF

[REDACTED]

Submission from Northenden Neighbourhood Forum to Local Government Boundary Commission for England review of Manchester's ward boundaries – Sun 25 Sep 2016:

1. Introduction

(a) Northenden Neighbourhood Forum is a democratic, non-party political statutory body established under the terms of the Localism Act 2011. Our assigned area is essentially the Northenden Village area. The vast majority of our area comes within the Northenden Ward, with a very small unpopulated part within the West Didsbury ward.

(b) Membership of the Forum is open to anyone 16 & over who lives or works in the area, or represents part or all of it as a Councillor/MP/MEP.

(c) We currently have approximately 550 members, almost all of whom reside in the Forum's area.

(d) The Forum has an Executive Committee, elected annually by the membership. A small sub-group of the Committee looked in detail at the consultation papers, population projections, etc, and brought a report and a suggested submission to a meeting of the whole Committee on Tue 20 Sep 2016. The Committee as a whole agreed a few changes to the draft and then voted unanimously to accept the revised draft, which is this document, as the NNF's submission.

2. Population numbers / ward sizes

(a) We note that the new ward boundaries are to be based on the projected population figures for 2022 which have been drawn up by the Council and agreed by the Commission. Each ward is broken down into about 6-8 individual polling districts, and current and projected populations are given for each.

(b) The headline is that the electorate for the Manchester City Council area is projected to increase from 370,000 (2015) to 417,000 (2022). As there will still be 96 Councillors, and there are 3 Councillors per Ward, the average ward size under the new arrangements will be 13,032 electors per ward.

(c) The Commission aims to make all the wards roughly the same size. It is recognised that this is impossible to achieve exactly, so a further guideline is that no ward should be more than 10% over or under the average. (range 11,729 to 14,335). Any recommended pattern that did not fit within these guidelines is very unlikely to be accepted by the Commission.

3. Wythenshawe / Northenden population analysis

(a) The current Northenden ward contains 6 polling districts, as follows:

Polling district	Description	Electorate 2015	Projected Electorate 2022
NOA	Eastern half of Northern Moor – Princess Pkway to E, Wythenshawe Rd to S, extends westwards to Orton Rd & the end of Yew Tree Lane	2250	2353
NOB	NW Benchill, east of Brownley Rd & north of Hollyhedge Rd (southern part, between Hollyhedge Rd & Benchill Rd)	2640	2661
NOC	Northenden Village, north of Palatine Rd / Church Rd / Ford La	1923	2248
NOD	NW Benchill, east of Brownley Rd & north of Hollyhedge Rd (northern part, between Altrincham Rd & Benchill Rd)	1257	1257
NOE	Northenden Village, south of Palatine Rd / Church Rd and west of Royle Green Rd	2384	2384
NOF	Northenden Village, south of Ford La and east of Royle Green Rd	1144	1473

(b) More widely, the Wythenshawe and Northenden part of Manchester (ie everything south of the River Mersey) is very self-contained. The geography of the area means that the Commission may be unlikely to recommend a ward which straddles the River Mersey (although if they did, it would be the Northenden / West Didsbury border that would be the likely crossing point).

(c) Any suggested changes therefore need to take into account the picture for the whole of Wythenshawe, as we recognise that if we make a suggestion simply for the Northenden area that had an effect on other parts of Wythenshawe that meant the proposed wards exceeded the population guidelines, it would be rejected.

(d) Although the population of Wythenshawe as a whole is projected to increase, some other areas especially around the City Centre are projected to increase by much more, so the 5 wards of Wythenshawe as they currently stand are projected to lie below the average ward size in 2022 as follows:

Baguley -8% (projected electorate 11,986)

Brooklands -12% (11,406)

Northenden -5% (12,376)

Sharston -4% (12,552)

Woodhouse Park -13% (11,398)

TOTAL 59,718

It's likely therefore that the Commission will propose, at least, to rearrange the boundaries to bring all the new wards within 10% below the average.

(e) It can also be seen from the total though that with 5 wards for Wythenshawe the average ward size is $59,718 \div 5 = 11,944$, which is within 10% of the city average, whereas reducing Wythenshawe to 4 wards would make the wards too big. So – unless the Mersey is straddled as described above – we can assume that there will still be 5 wards for Wythenshawe, and the issue is how the population is redistributed within it.

4. Issues re Community Identity, linkages and delivery of efficient local government

(a) All of NNF's populated area is contained within the one ward, Northenden Ward, and our prime concern is to recommend that this is maintained, i.e. whatever rearrangement happens, the Village is not split between wards.

(b) The next basic issue as NNF sees it is the fact that the current Northenden Ward is basically split three ways, and is not the optimum grouping of communities.

Essentially the ward comprises three quite distinct areas:

Northenden Village (projected pop 6105)

Eastern Northern Moor (2353)

NW Benchill (3918)

Obviously there are some connections between all the areas, and the level of connection depends on the individual. Even so, there are a number of ways that this division is unhelpful and we shall show below that the three communities, particularly NW Benchill, are really quite separate and distinct.

(c) It seems that our Councillors have to deal with three distinct communities, with separate residents' groups and so on and with different relevant issues. This affects the ability to deliver efficient local government. For example there have been occasions when Northenden Councillors have told us that they are unable to attend a meeting with us as they are attending another meeting in Benchill. Meanwhile duplication arises when the set of Councillors representing the other part of Northern Moor (Brooklands Cllrs) or Benchill (Sharston Cllrs), as appropriate, have also to keep abreast of issues affecting those areas and in some cases attend the same meetings.

(d) There can also be a perception that the Ward is divided into three areas of equal size, need and commitment needed, whereas in fact the Northenden Village area makes up half the population of the ward. This can lead perhaps to a diminution of the work undertaken and priority afforded by policy makers to the Village area.

(e) Although we recognise that the population figures mean Northenden Village will necessarily be paired with an adjoining suburb, we would highly recommend that it is joined with only one, not two.

(f) A further issue which doesn't affect the Village, but which does affect the other two areas, is the division of defined suburbs into two. In the case of Northern Moor, the dividing line of Orton Rd is straight down the middle, with the western part of the area in the Brooklands ward, and the eastern in Northenden. Northern Moor is a clearly defined area, with Wythenshawe Park to the south, extending along Wythenshawe Rd to near the junction with Moor Rd (the new Metrolink line) and along Sale Rd to the border with Trafford Council at Sale Moor.

(g) Similarly, the division of Benchill seems even more strange. The main focus of the shopping area for that part of Wythenshawe is at the junction of Hollyhedge Rd and Brownley Rd (the old 'Benchill roundabout'). The whole of the rest of the area south of the M56 and north (and east) of the Civic Centre lies in Sharston ward whilst this one quarter is in Northenden.

(h) The view of NNF is that the connections between Northenden Village and Northern Moor are much stronger than those between Northenden and Benchill. During the set up process of the Forum in 2013, the steering group of residents keen to establish a Forum organised several open meetings and stalls in the Village to publicise the possibility of the establishment of a Northenden Neighbourhood Forum, gain wider support and involvement, and agree, amongst other things, the

geographical area that the Forum should cover. At the open meetings a series of votes were taken by the Northenden residents present on possible geographical areas on which to base our application – and this provided a good indication of how the residents of Northenden village saw their local connections (as opposed to how decision makers elsewhere saw them). The initial group of potential members in fact voted to include Northern Moor alongside Northenden as the Forum's area, but following communication between the Forum's then steering group and community leaders in Northern Moor – who were keener to keep separate and work jointly with Brooklands particularly because of the shared issues relating to the provision of the majority of the area's housing by the then Parkway Green Housing Trust – it was agreed that we would restrict our application to the Northenden Village & Sharston Industrial Estate areas.

When it came to joining with the Benchill area there was unanimous opposition, as it was felt that there is very little connection between the two areas either physically or culturally.

(i) In our experience there are few issues that arise that affect Benchill and Northenden Village jointly, and those that do tend to be matters that also apply to Wythenshawe area as a whole.

(j) Residents of NW Benchill tend to have links with the other 'quadrants' of the Benchill area, look southwards to the Benchill shops and Wythenshawe Civic Centre for retail purposes, and use community facilities such as Benchill Community Centre, Jimmy Egan's Boxing Academy and the Manchester College facilities which are also used by those from other parts of Benchill, but little connected to Northenden.

(k) The M56 and Altrincham Road form a major boundary, and it is only housing on the furthest extent of Roundwood Rd and Altrincham Rd in a small part of Northenden Village that could really be said to connect with the Benchill part of the ward, and even that involves crossing a major dual carriageway at a motorway roundabout. Few people undertake this on foot.

(l) Transport and cultural links between NW Benchill and eastern Northern Moor are even weaker than those between Northenden Village and Northern Moor.

(m) The connections between Northern Moor and Northenden are also hampered by a major route – the A5103 Princess Parkway – but nevertheless there is substantially more movement between the two areas both on foot and by car/bus/taxi as can be observed at the Princess Parkway / Sale Rd / Wythenshawe Rd / Palatine Rd junction and the Yew Tree Lane footbridge. The communities along Sale Rd look to Northenden Village for shopping provision eg at Tesco, & other facilities such as the Northenden Group practice doctors on Palatine Rd and the Acorn Veterinary surgery. Similarly many Northenden residents use the Glenmaye dental practice on Sale Rd in Northern Moor. The Catholic parish straddles both (St Hilda's / St Aidan's) and some Northenden Village children attend Northern Moor primary schools. Traditionally communities on some streets to the west of Princess Parkway refer to their address as Northenden, and the road layout predates the conversion of Princess Parkway to motorway status in the early 1970s.

(n) Connections between Northenden and West Didsbury are also interrupted by a major barrier – the River Mersey. That said, the two main transport connections are well-used by Northenden residents with frequent buses out of Northenden up Palatine Rd and Princess Parkway, and a number of Northenden residents using both West Didsbury and Didsbury village for shopping and socialising. The majority private housing in Northenden Village is more similar in characteristic to West Didsbury than to the mostly social housing areas of Northern Moor and Benchill. Northenden and West Didsbury share the experience of bordering the river with associated leisure and environment experience. Residents from the parts of West Didsbury near to Palatine Rd often use Northenden for shopping and business purposes, and a steady flow of pedestrians between Northenden and West Didsbury can be observed.

5. Summary of our response and suggested changes

Northenden Neighbourhood Forum welcomes the opportunity the review affords to re-examine the current composition of the Northenden ward and to make several observations and to explore the case for changes to the existing ward boundaries. Our views and areas for consideration are as follows:

1. That there should continue to be a Northenden ward. The village of Northenden is a historic and distinct community with a shared heritage
2. That the core of the Northenden Ward is that recognised in Polling Districts, NOC, NOE and NOF. These Districts should remain intact and inseparable.
3. The separation of the ward into three distinct areas hinders effective local government and community representation and consultation in both the core Northenden Village area and the divided communities of Benchill and Northern Moor. We suggest that Northenden Village is paired with just one other area.
4. In our opinion and experience of connections with adjoining (Manchester) areas, Northern Moor is the most connected with Northenden, then West Didsbury. Benchill has substantially less connection with Northenden than the other two.
5. We suggest that the Village (current polling districts NOC, NOE, NOF) be joined in a ward with, in order of priority, (a) Northern Moor or (b) West Didsbury. A discussion of the population issues of these two options is given in Section 6 below.

6. Population issues / suggested boundaries to be adopted for our Recommendations 5(a) & 5(b).

(a) Northern Moor This would assume that the border of the River Mersey remains intact, and that there are still 5 wards in Wythenshawe, which would have an average size of 11,944. The challenge is to rearrange population so that all wards are within 10% of the Manchester average of 13,032 when the overall.

We suggest that Northenden Village (pop 6105) and eastern Northern Moor (2353) is joined by polling district BKD (3,525) and the part of BKC north of Wythenshawe Rd (estimated half of 1892 = 950 ?) to make a nicely shaped ward of approximately 12,900 keeping all of Northern Moor and Northenden together.

This would leave the remaining population of Brooklands as 6931. The current Baguley ward is 11,986 ie 18,917 west of the M56. The way the populations work means that there would need to be (at least) one ward further south in Wythenshawe that comprises streets from both sides of the M56/A5103 north/south axis. This is not ideal, but a suggestion is that some communities either side of the M56 near Hollyhedge Rd could be combined in one ward. There is a less defined catchment area for shops in that central point and some residents from just west of the M56 do use the Benchill and Wythenshawe Civic Centre shops. Although divided by the M56, there is a substantial amount of housing on both sides geographically near to each other and there is the new Metrolink line as a connection too.

An alternative would be to include some or all of Newall Green with areas east of the M56. These areas, particularly BAG and southern parts of BAE and BAF, look to a large extent to Wythenshawe Civic Centre lying geographically near and with bus links across the M56 along Simonsway. As in the above paragraph, the housing to the east of the M56 is very close to, and of similar heritage to, that west of the M56, particularly south of Simonsway.

In either case it should be possible to transfer enough electors out of selected areas west of the M56 to leave one remaining ward based on Brooklands and Baguley. There would then be the joint ward combining Newall Green & south Benchill or Woodhouse Park, as preferred, and then two more wards maximising connections in the Sharston, Benchill, Peel Hall, Woodhouse Park & Moss Nook areas.

(b) Didsbury West This would move the 6105 electors out of the Wythenshawe area, leaving 25,745 between the 2 wards west of the motorway and 27,868 east of it – both of which would divide well into 2 wards. It might also provide more flexibility for the Commission when allocating population to wards in the south of the city.