



17 June 2016

Professor Colin Mellors
Chair
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
14 floor, Millbank Tower
London SW1P 4QP



Dear Professor,

Thank you for your further correspondence to my office concerning the draft recommendations for electoral arrangements in Birmingham City Council.

I would like to thank the Commission for allowing this additional consultation to try and ensure that the residents of the Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield and in Birmingham can have a further say to have boundaries that best reflect their communities. I would also like to thank the Commission for listening to some of the residents' concerns in the Royal Town, for instance in respect of Sutton Park being split across a number of wards, rather than just in one ward.

However, sadly, some other concerns which must be dealt with remain. Sutton Coldfield is the second largest constituency in the Birmingham Council area by electorate, and by far the largest by area, therefore it is with concern that the proposal would still see the Royal Town under represented on Birmingham City Council. The proposals still reduce the number of Councillors in Birmingham to ten despite a clear push by the City Council to build over six thousand additional properties in the Royal Town which means that the area deserves and warrants eleven Councillors instead of ten.

It should be noted that political parties, community groups and the Town Council referendum group all came together to ask for eleven Councillors, I hope the Commission can therefore understand that with this level of agreement residents wishes should be met. If they are not, the wards in area will be hundreds of residents each larger than the average for the rest of the City. It should also be noted that over 130 residents of Sutton Coldfield wrote in echoing this need for fair representation and eleven Councillors for the Royal Town. It is vital that the return of the Town Council is not made to look like it has led to Sutton Coldfield having fewer City Councillors.

It should also be highlighted that a number of developments have been given planning permission that have not been included by the Council, in particular two new care homes proposed one for 538 Lichfield Road and one for 63-65 Penns Lane will add a further 150 plus residents to the numbers in Sutton Coldfield.

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However, most importantly, I fear there has been a miscalculation in the numbers leading to a reduction in quota for Sutton Coldfield. The latest report from the Commission states that the 2021 electorate for Sutton Coldfield is 83765 (I have shown above how that is already going up by the month).

This has been divided by the average electors of 8053 (average per Councillor for 102 Councillors) leading to a quota of 10.4. However, if Sutton was given its eleventh Councillor as requested the average electors would be 7975 as there would be one extra Councillor. This number is 813401 divided by 102 i.e. number of residents in 2021 divided by number of Councillors. Doing this shows that Sutton Coldfield has a quota of 10.5 and so should be rounded to eleven Councillors not ten under the Commission's guidance.

This, combined together with the fact that a large number of houses being planned by the Council which could easily be built earlier than claimed so far on current trends as well as new permission due to be completed before 2021 show Sutton Coldfield should have eleven Councillors allowing a Whitehouse Common Ward to be created.

The Commission did look at the omission of the Whitehouse Common Community from the proposals and how it was being split. Sadly, the new draft still splits part of the neighbourhood forum area and leaves the community without a ward named after them. It is clear this community is large enough for a Councillor of their own and I would ask the Commission to make the required changes to provide the eleventh Councillor for the Whitehouse Common area.

As a staunch defender of the Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield's borders I know, therefore, where the Erdington border with Sutton Coldfield is and I was surprised to see the Erdington Parish boundary on Harman Road/ Berwood Farm Road being broken and the area taken from Erdington to Pype Hayes. It is clear that this area is part of Erdington and has been for hundreds of years at least. For administrative boundaries to mean anything they must mean something to local residents who live there and just as I would object to the Commission breaking Sutton Coldfield's border I think the Commission should also respect the Northern border of Erdington and retain that area between the Chester Road and Sutton Coldfield in Erdington Ward.

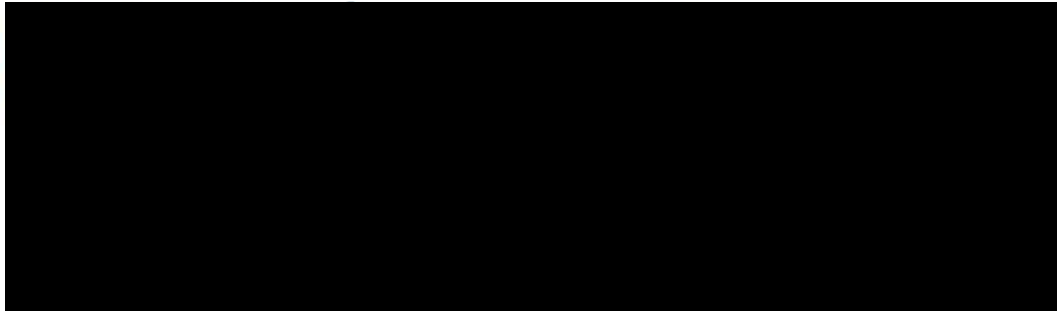
This can be accommodated by a small swap in polling districts which more clearly identify with the wards they would be moved to anyway. By moving Birches Green back into Pype Hayes, making the Railway Line with its large embankment the border with Stockland Green, returning Wyrley Birch to Stockland Green and keeping all of the Witton Lodge Road area in the same ward communities would be protected and the main principals of the Commission's proposals retained.



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The local media in North Birmingham has also highlighted the concerns of residents from Bandywood in Oscott about being removed from their natural Oscott community and being added to Kingstanding Ward. Both these areas border Sutton Coldfield and again I would highlight support for the "Keep Bandywood in Oscott" Campaign which asks the Commission to use community boundaries in the Kingstanding and Oscott areas instead of the artificial split currently proposed.

The Commission has listened to community groups in Acocks Green and Moseley in this latest stage and I ask that they also listen to the views of residents from Sutton Coldfield and North Birmingham who have made it clear they would like the changes outlined above.



Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP